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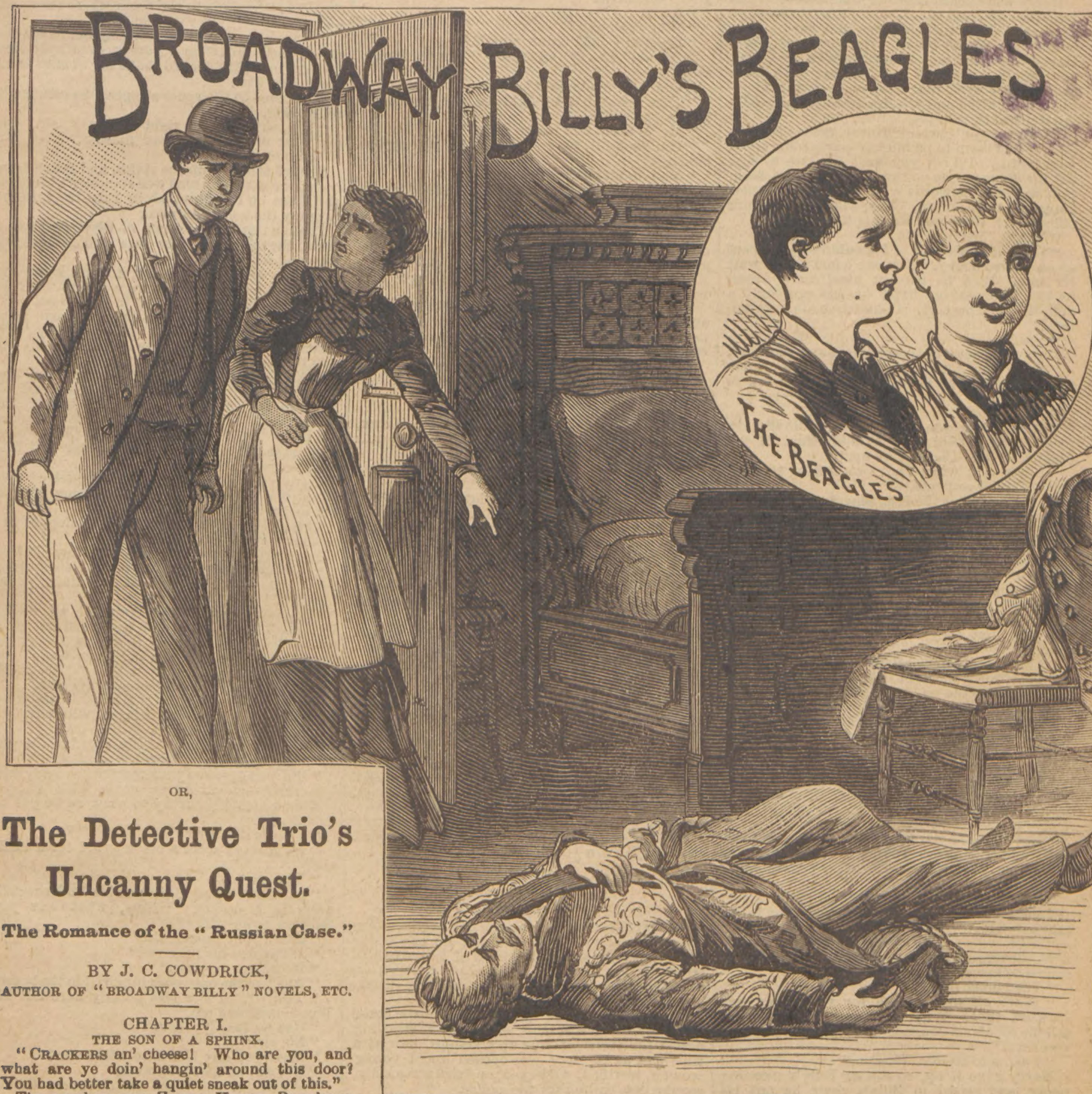
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OR,
**The Detective Trio's
Uncanny Quest.**

The Romance of the "Russian Case."

BY J. C. COWDRICK,
AUTHOR OF "BROADWAY BILLY" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE SON OF A SPHINX.

"CRACKERS an' cheese! Who are you, and what are ye doin' hangin' around this door? You had better take a quiet sneak out of this."

The speaker was Happy Harry, Broadway Billy's office boy and detective apprentice. It

THERE ON THE FLOOR BEFORE BROADWAY BILLY'S GAZE LAY THE BODY OF A MAN.

Broadway Billy's Beagles.

was early morning, and Harry had just reached the office to open it and make it ready for the day's business.

He was the proud possessor of a key to the office, and it was his duty to get around about half an hour earlier than his chief, to brush out the room and put everything in order. At his arrival this morning he found a boy of about his own age leaning against the office door.

Harry looked at him for a moment, expecting him to move out of the way, but the stranger only returned his look quietly and did not stir. This nettled Harry, and he broke out in the words quoted.

The other took it calmly, still keeping his hands in his pockets, his shoulder braced against the door, and very quietly asked:

"Who are you?"

"I'll pretty soon show ye who I am, if ye don't get out of my way," was Harry's rejoinder. "I want to get into that office."

The young stranger stepped aside at once.

"Why didn't ye say so at first?" he asked, still in his quiet, even tone. "I didn't know you belonged here. There has been a waste of words all for nothing. Are you Mr. Weston's office boy?"

Harry had opened the door while the other lad was speaking, and the office windows threw more light upon the scene, enabling each lad to get a better view of the other. The young stranger Harry discerned was about his own age, size, and build; not at all bad-looking; with those keen, steady eyes, that always indicate indomitable resolution and steadfastness of purpose—the General Grant eyes.

"Crackers an' cheese!" Harry again ejaculated. "You seem to be mighty particular about your words. I'll bet you don't hesitate to sing out for dinner when you are hungry. But, then, that wouldn't be words wasted, unless the locker happened to be empty. Yes; I'm Mr. Weston's office boy. Were you waiting to see him?"

"Yes."

"Well, if you'd said so I wouldn't have opened on you so heavy. You can come in and wait for him. He'll be here at nine, sharp, unless he has business on hand or has got into a difficulty of some sort. Come to see him on business?"

"Yes."

Harry had set a chair for the young stranger. "Have you got a case for Mr. Weston?" the assistant asked, as he went about his work of cleaning up.

"No."

"Why don't you talk?" Harry finally demanded, impatiently. "Ain't afraid of yer tongue, be ye? Come, tune up."

"I only talk when I have something to say," was the quiet response.

Harry looked at the boy, sharply.

That he had spoken to some purpose this time, was certain. His words meant even more than they said.

"Crackers an' cheese!" exclaimed the office boy. "You're a curious kind of rooster. What's your name?"

"Seth Marten."

"That's a good enough name. Mine is Harry Hillyard, but they call me Happy Harry for short."

"I am usually called Silent Seth."

"They hit you right when they called you that! You're the son of a Sphinx, I guess."

At which Silent Seth made no response.

But determined to draw the silent boy out further if possible and learn what had brought him there, Harry asked:

"Do you know Mr. Weston?"

"I have seen him once."

"That's a slight acquaintance. You said you hadn't a case for him."

No response.

"But you said you wanted to see him on business, and I suppose your boss has sent you. Where do you work? What do you do for a living?"

"I'm out of work," was the brief reply.

"Then you have come here on your own hook, maybe? Have you?"

"No."

"Crackers an' cheese! It's misery to talk to such a fellow as you are."

"Then don't talk."

"That's all well enough for you to say, but we ain't alike. Why can't you go ahead and tell me all about yourself and what has brought you here?"

"I came to see Mr. Weston."

Harry gave it up, so taking Billy's morning paper, and seated in Billy's chair he put his heels upon the desk, paying no further attention to Silent Seth for a considerable time.

The silent boy neither moved nor spoke, and half an hour passed.

Broadway Billy had not yet appeared, and was now quite behind his regular hour.

Presently Harry looked at the clock, and an exclamation escaped him.

"Crackers an' cheese!" he cried, "the boss is late this morning! There's a difficulty, and I'mbettin' on it. He told me he wanted to be on time this morning."

He looked for Silent Seth to say something, but the silent boy had nothing to offer.

"No tellin' when he'll be here now," Harry went on. "May be here any minute, or may not be here till noon. If you can't wait, I'll tell him anything you want me to say to him. What do ye want me to say to him for you?"

"Nothing; I'll wait."

Harry was decidedly chagrined. His curiosity was keenly aroused; what could this boy's business with Broadway Billy be?

"You're a mighty mysterious fellow," Harry declared, finally, betraying his dissatisfaction.

Silent Seth made no comment, and Harry resumed his reading.

But the situation was becoming unbearable.

"Say," he demanded, "can't you tell me what your business is?"

"No."

"Why can't you?"

"Because I don't know myself."

"Whew!" Harry whistled. "That's likely, that is!"

Silent Seth made no rejoinder.

"Then what has brought ye here, anyhow?" Harry demanded.

"Mr. Weston told me to come."

"Hol' that's it, hey? Why didn't you say so long ago?"

"You didn't ask me."

"You beat the Dutch. But, what does he want of you?"

"I don't know."

Happy Harry was about to make further effort toward getting information out of this strange boy when he heard Broadway Billy's well known step, and he dropped the paper and vacated the official chair.

The door opened, and the proprietor of the office entered. His face had a thoughtful expression, and Harry knew that something serious was on his mind.

Billy noted at a glance who was present.

"Ha! my lad, here, are you?" he said to Silent Seth.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I'm glad to find you so prompt. Harry, this is Seth Marten, or Silent Seth. Seth, this is Happy Harry Hillyard."

"We've been gettin' acquainted," remarked Harry dryly.

"Yes, I suppose so, for I am late. Well, Seth, how would you like to work for me? That is what I wanted to see you about. After what I saw of you yesterday I know you will suit me."

"I am out of work, sir, and if you think I'll do I'm willing to try."

"Very well; that settles it. I know well the value of boys in my business, and I think you and Harry will make a good team. As a rule I'll try to have one of you at the office when the other is out, but there will be times when you will work together. When can you enter upon duty, Seth?"

"Now, sir!"

Billy smiled. He liked the unaffected manner of this boy. He had already seen something of him, as he had said; enough to judge of his worth.

"Very well; your pay will be the same as Harry's, and both be on equal footing so there will be no excuse for jealousy between you. When you have differences, come to me. Now give me your attention, for I have the mystery of strange tragedy to solve, and shall require all the help you can give me."

CHAPTER II.

A TRAGIC AFFAIR.

AT twenty minutes to nine one bright morning a young man was walking up one of the cross-streets in the neighborhood of Twenty-third street, in the direction of Broadway, when his attention was attracted by the piercing shrieks of a woman.

Stopping short, he quickly located the house from which the sounds came, and speeding across the street, sprung up the steps, two at a time just as the door was opened and a young woman, terrified, wild-eyed, and still screaming, sprung out, calling for the police.

The young man, a strong, broad-shouldered fellow of twenty-one, with black hair and

smooth face, and black, piercing eyes, put out his arm and stopped the young woman, while he demanded:

"What's the matter here? What are you kicking up such a row about?"

"Oh! sir!" the horrified answer, "my master has been murdered! Let me go for the police at once!"

"Never mind going; they will be here soon enough. See the crowd your screams are bringing. Lead me to the scene of the murder at once. I am an officer."

The young woman hesitated, looking at the young man questioningly, and he, throwing open his vest, displayed a detective's badge pinned upon his suspender.

Quite a crowd was collected at the foot of the steps, growing larger each moment. Turning to the crowd, the young man said, hurriedly:

"This young woman says murder has been done here. Some of you hunt up a policeman and send him here at once."

Then the young man turned and entered the house, drawing the young woman within, and the door closed.

This young man was William Weston, better known as "Broadway Billy."

"Now," he ordered, as soon as he had closed the door, "lead me to the room where the crime was done."

The young woman was wringing her hands and crying and laughing together in a hysterical fashion, and Billy had to shake her arm to bring her to her wits.

"Take me to the room at once," he commanded, sternly.

"Yes, sir; yes, sir; right this way, sir. Oh! my poor master, my poor master! Poor Mr. Worthmore!"

She led the way up the stairs, and into a front room, the door of which was standing wide open, and there on the floor before Broadway Billy's gaze lay the body of a man.

The victim was a man of fifty, perhaps, a spare, slight person, who was clad in dressing-robe and slippers.

He was lying on his back, and his gown and the carpet where he lay were wet with his life's blood. He had been stabbed in the breast.

One hand, the right, was open, the arm lying at full length straight out from the body. The other hand was lying partly across the body and was tightly clinched.

That the man had been dead for some time was evident, for the body was cold, and the blood on the carpet was thick and black. The crime must have been done the previous evening, for the bed had not been slept in. There were some signs of a struggle, for a chair had been overturned and broken.

Lifting the clinched hand Billy pressed open the stiffening fingers, when something dropped out and fell to the floor.

This object Billy picked up, and stepped to a window to examine.

It proved to be a gold coin, with three links of a gold chain attached, the piece being pierced near the edge and one of the links passed through.

The coin was a Russian imperial, as one side indicated. The other side had been cut away and polished, and upon it was a monogram formed with the letters L and I in artistic form.

Billy looked at the dead man's clothes on the chair to see if the chain had been his own.

It had not, evidently, for the man's watch was in his pocket and was secured with simply a doubled black silken tape.

"What's your name?" Billy asked of the girl.

"Tilly Tucker, sir," was the answer.

"Did you ever see your master have anything like this?"—meaning the chain with its coin charm, which held it up to view as he put the question.

"I never did, sir."

"He always wore a black braid for a chain, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right," and Billy put his find carefully away in a pocket. "Now, what was your master's name, Tilly?"

"Jabez Worthmore, sir."

"What was his business?"

"He hadn't any, sir."

"Are you the only one employed in the house?"

"Yes, sir. There was nobody here but Mr. Worthmore and me."

"Has no family, then?"

"No, sir."

"Have you any idea who killed him?"

"No, sir; no idea whatever."

"When did you make the discovery that he had been murdered?"

"Just when I screamed so. I had come up to

call him, and the door being open I saw him just as he is now."

"Did you always come up to call him?"

"Whenever he overslept himself. His usual time to get up was eight o'clock, and I called him whenever he was not down by half-past eight. That was his orders, the poor man."

"Had he any enemy, far as you know?"

"Not a one, sir."

Just at that moment came a ring at the bell, together with the tattoo of a policeman's club on the door.

"There's your policeman," said Billy.

"Shall I let 'em in, sir?"

"Certainly; let them in at once, and so save a broken door."

The girl hurried away and down the stairs, and Billy took a last look around the room before the police entered.

The room was well furnished, showing that Worthmore had been a man of good taste and one who had looked after his comfort with considerable care. His clothes lay upon a chair where he had evidently placed them at the time of dressing and putting on his dressing-robe.

A reclining chair stood near the bed, with an adjustable reading-stand attached, upon which was an open book. The head of the chair was toward the gas, which was now out. The curtains had been drawn, but now one was up, the one Billy had raised at the time of his stepping to the window to look at the coin he had found.

Heavy steps were soon heard on the stairs, and two policemen appeared upon the scene.

"Who are you?" one of them immediately asked.

Billy showed his badge, and had the respect of the officers at once.

"I am Billy Weston," he answered.

"Broadway Billy?"

"Yes."

"How did you get here so quick?"

"Happened to be passing when the alarm was given. Here's a bad case, officers, I suspect."

"Bedad, ye are roight," agreed the one who had not yet spoken.

"Have you found a clew?" asked the other.

"Have been here but a few minutes, and have not examined things, yet. Now, one of you had better go for the sergeant while the other takes care of the crowd down below."

"All right. Mike, you go and send the alarm, and I'll see that the crowd don't run off with the place."

"And I'll scrutinize things here," said Billy.

The two policemen went out, and as soon as they had gone Billy closed the door.

He then turned the body of the dead man partly over, to see if by any chance any further clew was to be found under him.

Nothing was found, and he next examined the pockets of the clothes on the chair. Here he found a variety of things—letters, papers, etc., and among them a rent-receipt book.

In this a good many stubs were dated only the day before, in pencil, with sums of money indicated on each which, in the aggregate, would amount to several hundred dollars. A name was on each stub, the name of a tenant, evidently, and that was all. It appeared that Worthmore was the owner of houses.

In one of the vest pockets was a small memorandum-book, in which were many entries in something that was Greek to Billy. He could read nothing of it but the names, which were every one set down in connection with the name Worthmore; as, "Worthmore vs. Guilding"; "Worthmore vs. Brown"; "Chipley vs. Worthmore," etc. And among the last entries was—"Worthmore vs. The Russian."

This arrested Billy's attention at once, since the finding of the Russian coin had led to the suspicion that possibly the murderer was a Russian.

This was the second link in the chain of evidence, what, indeed, seemed to be a pointer for the keen crime-searcher.

One thing the clothes did not contain was money, except some change in one pocket. The inner pocket of the vest, though, showed plainly where a large folding bill-book had been habitually carried.

Had robbery been the motive of the murder? Was the gold coin a charm that had been torn from the watch-chain of the assassin in the struggle? Was the murderer a Russian? These were the questions which his own sagacity was to solve.

CHAPTER III.

THE POLICE TAKE HOLD.

REPLACING everything as he had found it, except the gold coin, the receipt-book and the small

memorandum-book, he opened the door and called to the servant.

The young woman came in answer to his call, and she was now weeping. She was rather good-looking, about twenty-four years of age, neat and tidy in dress and evidently intelligent. Billy noted that a shiver passed over her as she entered the room, and that she averted her gaze from the body on the floor.

"I want to ask a few more questions before the others come," Billy remarked.

"If I can answer them I will, sir," was the willing response. "I will do anything I can toward clearing this horrible mystery and in finding the murderer."

"How long have you been in Mr. Worthmore's employ, Miss Tucker?"

"Nine years, sir. I was only fifteen when I took hold, but I had been living here before that, with my aunt, who was housekeeper then. She died here, and Mr. Worthmore gave me the place. He had promised my aunt to take care of me. He was good and kind to me, sir," and as she spoke she broke out crying afresh.

That her grief was genuine, Billy had not the shadow of a doubt. No suspicion could attach to her.

"Then, having been here so long, you must know all about what Mr. Worthmore's habits were."

"He had no bad ones so far as I know, sir."

"And, too, you must know who his friends were. Had he any very intimate associates?"

"Yes, sir; some."

"Any by the name of Guilding, or Brown, or Chipley, or Barrow?"

Billy mentioned some of the names he had found in the memorandum-book, such as came to mind.

"I know Mr. Guilding, sir. He was my master's closest friend, perhaps. He came here quite often of an evening to play chess."

"Chess, hey?"

"Yes."

Here was the key to the mysterious memoranda; they were, no doubt, Mr. Worthmore's record of his games.

"Was your master a member of a chess club?"

"I think he was, but I cannot be sure. Mr. Guilding can tell you about that, sir."

"What is Mr. Guilding's first name, and where does he live?"

The girl answered that his name was Felix, and gave the street and number of his residence.

"Have you ever heard Mr. Worthmore speak of a Russian?" was Billy's next inquiry. "Has such a person ever visited him here, to your knowledge?"

"I never have seen such a person, sir. He never has called here, I am sure."

"Your master owned some houses, did he not?"

"Yes, sir."

"And yesterday he went out to collect his rents?"

"I suppose so, sir; it was his regular day for doing so."

"Do you know what bank he does business with?"

The bank was named.

"Do you know whether he deposited yesterday or not, after collecting?"

"I don't know, sir; I never knew anything about such matters, for my master never told me."

"No; I suppose not. But, you know what kind of a pocketbook he carried, of course. Was it a big bill-book, which he carried in his inner vest pocket?"

"Yes, sir; and it was of dark red leather. But, you have seen it?"

"No; it is missing."

"Then how do you know what kind it was?"

Billy explained the simple mystery, and he would have found more questions to ask, no doubt, but just then a police sergeant entered the room, followed by two policemen.

"Any clew?" was the sergeant's first question.

Billy had never seen the officer before, nor he Billy, but the policeman who had gone for him had told him who was on the ground.

"Nothing definite," was Billy's quiet response. "I picked up a coin, and I have taken possession of a rent-receipt book and a small memorandum-book. That is all."

"Well, hand them over and I will take charge of them for the captain, or the coroner," and the officer extended his hand.

Billy looked at him coolly.

"You take charge of the house and body, and you will have enough to do," was the young detective's answer. "I guess I can take care of the things I have mentioned."

"If you attempt to go out of this room with a single article I'll arrest you," the sergeant threatened.

This sergeant was a big fellow, and his self-importance was a good deal bigger than his body. He had a captaincy in view.

"Well, that's cool, I must say," Billy quietly remarked. "If you will take my advice you won't try it on, Mr. What's-your-name. I guess I have about as much authority here as you have."

"What authority have you got? You are only a private detective."

"Am I? Well, cast your eyes at this and see if it says so."

Billy showed his badge.

"Thunder!" the fellow ejaculated. "I didn't know that."

"Well, you know it now. Do you suppose I would have told you what I had found, if I couldn't hold them?"

"No hard feelings, I hope. Are you going to Headquarters?"

"After I go to my office."

"And you are going to try your hand at this case?"

"You might be sure of that."

"Well, any help you want around here, let me know. I'll do all I can to help you."

Billy thanked him, and after a few words with the young woman, in the hall, took his leave and proceeded direct to his office, where Happy Harry and Silent Seth were awaiting him.

He had not been gone long from the house when the captain of the precinct appeared upon the scene, and shortly after his arrival a cab rolled up and a detective from Headquarters joined him.

It does not take long, in mighty Gotham, for the police machinery to get in motion, when Murder raises its horrid head.

The detective from Headquarters was one of the best men on the force, whom, for convenience, we shall designate as Channing. As soon as he entered the room he appeared to comprehend everything.

Touching the dead man, he said:

"Been dead several hours. Was killed before he retired. Probably reading when attacked. Made a fight, but was easily overcome. The motive not apparent. Have you made any discoveries, captain?"

"No," the captain answered; "but the sergeant here tells me Broadway Billy has been here. It seems he was the first man upon the scene after the alarm was given, and of course he has picked up whatever was to be found."

The detective rubbed his chin in a reflective way.

"That is the situation, eh? Do you know what he picked up, sergeant?"

"He told me he had found a coin, and had taken off with him a receipt-book and a small memorandum-book. I did not see 'em. Said he was going to Headquarters."

"That settles it. If Broadway Billy has been here, he has skimmed the cream off the pan, you may rely upon that. However, I'll look around and see if he has missed anything. Found any blood-marks around, captain?"

"Not a sign of blood anywhere except there," indicating the pool on the carpet.

Questions followed until the detective had gleaned all the information possible about Mr. Worthmore and his private affairs.

The young woman housekeeper evidently was glad when he was done, for she lost no time in getting out of the room and putting herself beyond the sound of his tongue.

"Well, here's a mystery," the detective summed up. "Who killed Jabez Worthmore? and what was he killed for? I believe Broadway Billy is right in his opinion, according to what we can guess of it from what the girl has been led to disclose. He evidently sets down robbery as the motive. Let's see how it looks.

"Yes' erday, we suppose, Mr. Worthmore went out to collect his rents. Some scoundrel saw him with a fat pocketbook, and resolved to have it. Followed him home, and by some means got into the house. Got into this room, but was seen by the victim before he could accomplish his design. Probably Worthmore began the attack, and in self-defense the rascal killed him. That's the usual way.

"Here in the vest is the mark of the pocket-book, just as the Retriever saw it and by it decided that a pocketbook had been taken. The man who killed Worthmore took his money. Then, the girl has told us she found the door of this room wide open when she came up to call her master, and the street door unfastened when she ran down to give the alarm. Yes; Broadway Billy is probably right in his ideas regard-

ing it, and he may, also, have a clew to the assassin."

"In the receipt-book, eh?" suggested the captain.

"Possibly; or in the memorandum, or in the coin he picked up—There, I did not question the girl about that, either; but, no matter, for I did not lay much store by the coin. Well, I'm going back to the office. Notify the coroner, captain, and set the law machinery going."

With that Channing took his leave, and in due time was at Police Headquarters, where he was soon closeted with Inspector Byrnes. The inspector heard his story, and when he had done, remarked:

"Your view is good, but I attach more importance to that coin than you seem to do. If only an ordinary coin, it would amount to nothing as a clew, and I am sure there must be some peculiarity about it or Broadway Billy would have left it for you to find. But, we shall see."

CHAPTER IV.

THE RETRIEVER BEATING FOR SCENT.

"Crackers an' cheese!" exclaimed Harry, when Broadway Billy had told him and Silent Seth all about the murder. "That is a case that is going to make us shed hair, and I'm betting on it. What do you say, Seth?"

Silent Seth said nothing.

"Yes, it has the appearance of a difficult case," assented Billy, "and it may worry us to solve the riddle. You boys will have to do your best, for the reputation of this office rests upon you as well as upon me; always keep that in mind."

"We'll do it—I mean I'll do it, you bet!" cried Harry. "I'm not talkin' for Seth. If he is so mighty 'fraid of his own breath, I'm not going to waste mine blowin' his horn for him. But, what do you want us to—I mean, what do you want me to do, boss? Say the word, and I'll rush a Russian out o' Russia in a rushin' hurry, if I can find one in the woods."

"In one respect, Harry," remarked Billy, "I think you would do well to take pattern after Seth."

"And what's that?" Harry inquired.

"In putting a bridle on your tongue. You talk too much."

"Crackers an' cheese! You talk about my talkin', boss; where was your own tongue when you was my age and size? From what I've read about you, yours was hung in the middle and worked at both ends; and I don't s'pose more'n a quarter you said went into print, either."

"I can see now where I made my mistake, though, Harry."

"Well, mebby I'll see it too, when I get to be a man. Don't believe I ever will, before. But, I'll put on the brakes all I can, though I won't promise to be a clam entirely, like Seth. He says he don't talk unless he has got something to say, and the trouble with me is, I have always got something to say, more or less. But, I'll take in a reef."

"Well, now to business. I will show you this coin again, and I want you to pay particular attention to the form of the chain links."

Billy gave them the coin, and each in turn looked at it carefully.

"The pointer I give is for you both to pay particular attention to watch chains," Billy enjoined, "and if you see one resembling these links, with a missing charm, follow the wearer, no matter who he is or where he goes. Understand?"

"We'll have him; I mean I will, or—"

"I don't know about that," said Billy. "You might watch a hundred years and not find the one with the broken chain, even if he walked the streets ev'ry day during all that time. If we learn anything that way it will be by pure chance. Still, I mention it, for chance is a big factor in a case sometimes."

Silent Seth made no remark, and Harry emulated his example.

"I am going to Headquarters now," Billy continued, "and we'll close the office for the forenoon. You boys go up to the scene of the crime and keep your eyes and ears open. We'll meet here again between one o'clock and three, when, if you have made any discoveries, you can report, or if I have made any I can give you definite work to do. I don't like to close the office, but it will give you boys a chance to get better acquainted."

When they had gone Billy paced the floor for a few minutes, turning the case over in mind; then putting up his "OUT" sign, he set forth for Headquarters.

Entering the inspector's private room he was cordially greeted, as usual.

"Well, Billy," remarked the chief, "it seems

that you are the favored man in the Worthmore case. What do you know?"

"Nothing much as yet," was Billy's response. "I think I have a clew, but it may not amount to anything. Here it is; see what you think of it. I found that tightly clinched in the dead man's hand."

"Just what I told Channing," the chief observed, more to himself than to Billy, and he took the coin and examined it carefully.

"What do you think of it?" the Retriever asked.

"Found it tightly clinched in the dead man's hand, you say? What's your theory?"

"Torn from the murderer's watch-chain in the struggle."

"It looks that way. Well, assuming that to have been the case, what then?"

"The murderer was a Russian."

"Good inference! What more?"

"Mr. Worthmore was something of a chess-player. Here is a record of his games with various persons, and among others I find mention of a Russian. He does not give the name; simply says 'The Russian'."

"Ha! you are coming at it now. There may be a good deal in that Russian theory. Anything more?"

"Not on that trail."

"Another?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"The motive."

"Well, let's hear your idea of that."

"Mr. Worthmore is the owner of some houses. He collects his own rents. He collected them yesterday, and had several hundred dollars in his possession last night, or I suppose he had. He carried his money in a large, red bill-book in his inner vest pocket. That money and bill-book are missing. I could not find them anywhere in the room. I have not been to the bank yet, to see if he deposited, but I'm going. I infer that some fellow knew he had that money, and entered the house for the purpose of robbery. Finding Worthmore up, a struggle followed, and in order to escape, the robber murdered him."

"Good reasoning. That is about the view Channing takes of it. Now, what are you going to do with that coin?"

"I thought I would put it on my own chain and wear it openly."

"Not bad, Billy; not bad at all. You want to take care it does not get you into trouble, though."

"I'll look out for that. I'm going into this thing, unless you don't want me to interfere with your men. If you object, why I'll drop out—"

"No, sir; I don't object. I want you to go ahead and see what you can do. It's your case, anyhow; you were first on the ground. I'll give my men the advantage of your clews, however, if you do not object."

"Of course. Well, I'll be off, and if I get hold of anything important, I'll let you know."

"Do so; and if you want help, don't hesitate to ask for it."

Billy took his leave, and the chief gave a satisfied nod as the door closed after him.

"Billy Weston is a born detective!" he said to himself. "His head is as level as Channing's, and it isn't a particle swelled, either."

He tapped a bell and brought one of his factotums.

"Tell Mr. Channing to come in," he ordered.

The detective was quickly on the spot.

"I told you so," the chief remarked. "That coin was anything but an ordinary one."

"That so? What was it?"

"In the first place it was found in the dead man's grasp."

"Ha! That so?"

"Yes. It is a Russian gold coin, an imperial, with one side polished and a monogram cut in it, the letters being L. and I. Attached to the coin are three links of a gold chain."

"No wonder the young Lecocq clung to it. It is a true pointer, or I miss my guess. Did you hold on to it, inspector?"

"Not a bit. I have allowed him to keep it. You have something to work upon now, Channing, so go ahead and let's see how quick this thing can be sifted and the murderer lodged in jail."

"I'll go at it and see what will come of it. I'm going to look into family affairs, and see if there was any one to benefit particularly by the man's death."

The chief made mention of the memorandum of chess games, with the mention of a Russian in that. Channing took his leave, and immediately the chief dropped that matter and took up another of as great importance to him.

As the shrewd inspector designed, it was to be a contest between Broadway Billy and the acute Channing, both starting upon the same clews.

Billy had hastened to the bank where, as the young woman had told him, Mr. Worthmore had his money and did business.

On arriving there he inquired:

"Did Mr. Jabez Worthmore deposit some money here yesterday?"

"Who are you, and why do you ask that?" were the counter-questions.

"I am a detective, and I ask because Mr. Worthmore was murdered last night and we are trying to find his murderer."

"Murdered! Is it possible? Just a moment, sir, and I'll see. No, after a brief search, 'he did not make any deposit yesterday, sir. Who do you suppose killed him?"

Billy talked for a few minutes with the teller, giving him brief particulars of the crime; but, failing to learn anything, was soon off upon another tack.

He was going to interview Felix Guilding.

CHAPTER V.

BAFFLED ALL AROUND.

BILLY found Mr. Guilding at home, and knew by his face that he had not yet heard of the death of his friend.

The young detective came at once to business.

"You were acquainted with Mr. Jabez Worthmore, I believe, sir," he began the interview.

"Were acquainted with him?" the man interrogated sharply. "What do you mean by putting your question that way, young man?"

Mr. Guilding was a man of fifty or so, a thin, nervous individual, and as he put the question he clutched the arm of his chair, leaning forward with keen anxiety expressed upon his face.

"Because Mr. Worthmore is now dead," Billy informed him.

"Dead? Jabez Worthmore dead!"

Mr. Guilding had sprung partly up, but still clung to the arm of his chair as if his next move would carry the chair with him.

"He was murdered last night," Billy further announced.

"Dead? Murdered? My God! this is horrible! Who killed him? What was the motive?"

At that second shock the man sprung further up, taking the chair with him, and then fell back in it, almost choking. His face was livid, and he fumbled at his throat as if he could not breathe.

"I can't answer either question, sir," responded the young detective, "because I do not know. I have come to you in the hope of getting information that will throw some light upon the terrible tragedy. You and Mr. Worthmore were fast friends, I understand. You must know all about his private life."

"Who are you, young man?"

"I am a detective, sir. I happened to be the first man on the spot after the crime was discovered."

"Poor Jabez, poor Jabez! Everything must be done to hunt down his slayer and drag him to justice for the crime. What do you want to know? Poor Jabez, poor Jabez! Yes—yes, everything shall be done to hunt down his slayer!"

"Did Mr. Worthmore belong to a chess club?"

"Yes; he and I belonged to the same club. Why do you ask that?"

"I want to learn all I can about him, as well as to learn who his associates were."

"Yes; we both belonged to the Rook Club, where we used to meet often, and I sometimes went to his house, and he came here to play."

"Where is this Rook Club?"

The information was given.

"Is there a Russian belonging to that club?" Billy asked next.

"No; what has a Russian to do with the murderer?"

"I don't know; that is what I am trying to find out. Can you say whether Mr. Worthmore was acquainted with any Russian or not?"

"Well, yes, he was; some fellow whom he had met recently, and with whom he had played some games in which the Russian got the best of him. The last time I saw poor Jabez he said he was going to beat him if it took all summer."

"What was his name?"

"I don't know."

"Where did they play?"

"There, I don't know that, either."

This was baffling.

"That's too bad," he observed. "I was in hopes you could tell me all about this Russian, for it is just possible that he had something to do with the murder. I must find him."

"What! Do you think the Russian killed him?"

"I say it is possible he had something to do with the crime, and I must find him. I found this tightly clinched in Mr. Worthmore's hand," and he showed Mr. Guilding the coin.

"A Russian coin, with a monogram in Russian letters, you see," he called attention.

"Yes, I see. I am sorry now that I did not ask Jabez more about his Russian at the time, but we happened to be in a hurry. Yes, you must find him."

"Well, perhaps you can give me some other information, Mr. Guilding. Where are the houses Mr. Worthmore owned? Can you give me a list of them? I must go around among his tenants."

"Yes, I can do that, and will," and he mentioned streets and numbers, of which Billy made careful note.

Then he took his leave, making his next objective point the chess club building.

Arriving there, he found several members present and some games in progress, but as soon as he had made known the terrible news all play stopped and the players gathered around him to learn the particulars.

"And now," said Billy, when he had given them the facts of the matter, "I want to ask if you know anything about a Russian with whom Mr. Worthmore recently played chess. I want to learn something about that man, if possible, and thought this was the right place to apply."

"He has never played with a Russian here, sir," answered one who seemed to be an officer of the club, and who was, in fact, its secretary. "He has not been here more than two or three times during the past ten days, though. He must have met him elsewhere."

"Did Mr. Worthmore frequent other clubs?"

The names of two or three were given, where he attended occasionally.

Leaving his address with the secretary, so that the information could be sent to him in case anything was learned, Billy departed, to proceed to the other club rooms; but, nothing was learned of any Russian player. No one had heard of him, and no one who knew Mr. Worthmore had heard him mention the Russian.

"This is no secret, so far," the Retriever said to himself, when he gave up that line of search. "I'll now see about the tenants in Worthmore's houses. Possibly some one has heard of such a person. If not, I'll have to widen the circuit."

The houses were visited, one after another, in the order in which they came nearest to hand, but nothing was ascertained that aided his search.

Billy had two objects in view: One, to learn something about the Russian, and the other, to see if any one else could be struck who might be suspected of having attempted to rob Mr. Worthmore, knowing of his having so much rent-money on his person.

He failed in both. No Russian was to be found or heard of, nor could any suspicion be attached to any one in any of the houses he visited.

One thing seemed queer, and that was, how this Russian, with whom Mr. Worthmore had apparently been on intimate terms, for several days at least, could be known to no one else—or, at least, to none of the dead man's friends.

Still, he must be known to some one, and further search would no doubt bring him to light.

Billy had learned that the inquest was to be held at one o'clock, and was on hand at that time.

The inquest, however, revealed nothing new.

The first witness was the young woman, Tilly Tucker. After her came Billy, and after him the officers.

Nothing new was brought out—in fact, not so much as has been revealed to the reader, for Broadway Billy made no mention of his suspicions against the mysterious Russian.

So the inquest resulted in the inconsequential verdict that Mr. Jabez Worthmore had come to his death at the hands of an assassin to the jury unknown.

And so ended the "official" inquisition, and a permit followed for the burial.

Meanwhile the two Beagles, Happy Harry and Silent Seth, had been hovering near the scene of the crime for some time, but were gone when Billy appeared to attend the inquest, and he felt some curiosity to know whether they had discovered anything or not. The more so, since he had not seen Harry at dinner—from which the boy would absent himself only by reason of important engagements elsewhere.

Harry, it will be remembered, was living with Billy, at his home.

Before going to the office, as agreed upon, Billy first went home to see if Harry had been in yet, to find that he had, and Seth with him. They had arrived only a few minutes after he

had left the house at noon, and after dinner had set out for the office.

At the office Billy found them.

"Well, what word?" he asked, as he entered. "No word at all," answered Harry. "We didn't find your Russian runnin' around loose anywhere, and we couldn't get into the house for the blue-coat at the door. So we hung around with the crowd, and heard a good deal of nothin'."

Silent Seth said nothing.

Billy spent some time in conversation with his two *attaches*, and leaving them there together, proceeded again to Headquarters, where he met Detective Channing, who had just come in.

They went in, and together had their interview with the sagacious inspector. Their report that nothing more had been learned regarding the tragedy, only added to its mystery.

CHAPTER VI.

SILENT SETH'S SURPRISE.

A WEEK went by and nothing new had been evolved; the mystery of the Worthmore was as impenetrable as ever.

The Russian had been searched for high and low, by the police and by Broadway Billy and his Beagles, but was not to be found; nor was it known where Mr. Worthmore could have met him to play chess. The items in the memorandum of games were not dated, but the time of the games played with the unknown had been definitely fixed, for the games played immediately before and after had been ascertained, as it was easy enough to do, but the interim, so far as concerned the movements of the murdered man, was a blank.

Billy was wearing the tell-tale coin on his watch-chain, openly, but so far it had not been noticed by anybody.

Happy Harry was less happy than of yore, and Silent Seth was more silent than ever, if possible.

Billy had searched well into the life of Mr. Worthmore, only to be the more impressed with the man's record. It had not a bad spot on it anywhere; it was all plain and open except the two evenings upon which he had played chess with the undiscoverable man.

The Retriever had learned more about Russia and the Russians during that week than he had ever known before, and particularly about Russians in New York. He had been to the Russian Consul, on State street, hoping to gain some information about a man whose name would fit the initials on the coin, but without learning anything. He had made a pretty thorough canvass of the hotels and boarding-houses where Russians mostly congregated, but all in vain.

One afternoon Billy was seated in his office with Harry. They were talking about the case. Seth was out at the time.

"Are ye going to give it up, boss?" Harry had just asked.

"Not by any means!" Billy assured. "Many a detective has had to follow a trail for a year before securing what he wanted."

"That would kill me, sure. Crackers an' cheese! if this thing is going to drag on another week I'll be non eatabus and non sleepabus. Don't seem to me I was cut out for a detective, for I haven't got enough patience."

"You will have to learn to have patience, Harry."

"I s'pose so. If I had as much patience as I have got tongue, I'd do. Now there is Seth: he hasn't much to say, but he's got bushels of wait in him."

"Seth is a peculiar boy, Harry. He is always cool, never loses his temper, never talks unless to a purpose, and is as keen as a razor. See how he handled that Fitnam case."

"I know it, boss; he's all you say, and I reckon I'll have to water my laurel bush if I want to keep pace with him. But, here he comes now."

Steps were heard without; then the door opened and Silent Seth put in an appearance—as unconcerned as though he had only stepped out the moment before, whereas he had been absent several hours.

Closing the door, he approached the desk and said very quietly:

"I have found the Russian!"

"Found the Russian!" exclaimed Billy, bringing his feet down from the desk and sitting bolt upright.

"Found the Russian!" cried Happy Harry, excitedly. "Crackers an' cheese! Who is he? Where did ye find him? If you ever talked in your life, talk now!"

Seth betrayed no signs of exultation; he was as impassionate as a stoic.

Billy looked at him with wonder and admiration. If he really had made the discovery, he was a remarkable boy.

Had it been Happy Harry, he would have come in with a whoop and a jump, unable to contain himself, and would probably have stood on his head to give vent to his feelings before attempting to speak.

Seth paid no attention to Harry, but waited for Billy to speak.

"Where did you find him?" Billy asked.

"In a shoemaker's shop on Bleeker street, sir."

"What number?"

Seth told him.

"And you are sure he is the man we are looking for?"

"Yes."

"How did you find him?"

"I was passing the place, and happening to look down, saw two men playin' chess. I was interested at once, and looked closer. One man seemed to have a foreign look, and I made up my mind to drop the other case and investigate."

"You did right."

"I did as you had told me. Well, I went down and asked the cobbler if he would put some nails in the heels of my shoes for me, and sat down while he did it. I had a good chance then to watch the game and find out what I could about the players. The shoemaker is a Russian, and his name is Polarovsky."

Billy had made a pencil note of the street and number, and now he noted the name as well.

"Go on, Seth," he ordered.

"Well, one of the players was American, as I knew when he spoke, and that the other was a Russian I was sure, because he talked broken English just like the shoemaker. Besides, he and the shoemaker spoke together in a language I couldn't understand, and we know the shoemaker is a Russian. I took it to be plain enough that they were talking in that language."

"That's good reasoning. Go on."

"I looked for his watch-chain, but he hadn't any. His buttonhole was torn through, though, and the corner of his vest-pocket was ripped down. While they were playing, the Russian made a move on the board that cornered the other man, somehow, and then he and the shoemaker laughed, and the shoemaker said: 'You have got him there, Ludvik.' There's one letter that fits the monogram. But, I got both of 'em. The Russian's hat was off, and in the top of it I saw the letters L and I."

"Seth, you are a jewel!" Billy cried, laying his hand on the boy's shoulder, fondly.

"A jewel!" cried Happy Harry. "He's a whole casket o' gems! Crackers an' cheese! now I begin to live again. Whoop!"

With that he executed a manner of Indian dance in the middle of the floor, to work off some of his surplus pent-up delight. Seth stood perfectly calm and unconcerned.

Billy's breath was coming quicker as his blood was getting warmed up with his "detective fever," and, had he admitted it, he felt just like following Happy Harry's example in his old-time boyish manner. Here was light at last, thanks to one of his Beagles!

"Is that all, Seth?" he asked.

"That's all," was the answer. "The shoemaker had my shoes done then, and I hadn't any excuse to stay any longer, so I hurried right here. I did think of staying, and following the man when he went away, but I didn't know how long he might stay, and I knew you could take up the trail there, anyhow. Did I do right, sir?"

"You have done perfectly right, Seth. You are the best detective in New York this minute."

The boy sat down and held his peace, having said all he had to say, and Billy's words of praise, apparently, had no effect upon him whatever.

Broadway Billy could but look at the boy in wonder. How could he be so perfectly calm and unconcerned at such a time? It was Seth's "way."

"Yes, sir; you are the best detective in New York this minute. A hundred of them would give anything to know what you have just told me. Mind, now, not a word of this, boys! It is our secret and we will work it alone."

"You think he is the man?" asked Seth.

"There is every reason to believe that he is the one we are after, just as you decided yourself," answered Billy. "In the first place you found him playing at chess; next, he is a Russian; next, it appears that his watch has been tampered with in some manner or other, his buttonhole and pocket being torn; and, last and best, the in-

itals in his hat fit the monogram. He fills the bill pretty closely, certainly."

"And what are you going to do?" asked Harry.

"Why, bring the proof home to him, of course," answered the young chief. "Seth!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Go back to the place. If the Russian has not gone already, follow him when he does go and find out where he lives. If he has gone, return here and wait until I return. You, Harry, remain at the office, for that woman may come regarding the Spencer case. If she calls, tell her to leave word with you. I'll be back before many hours, I guess, and then perhaps we'll be able to get down to business and make things hum."

CHAPTER VII.

DOES BILLY MAKE A BLUNDER?

BILLY WESTON left his office with a light step, for there was light ahead! Now he had something to work upon, thanks to his faithful young apprentice.

That this Russian was the one who had played chess with Mr. Worthmore had yet to be proven, of course; but all that would come in due order.

Billy had not gone far when he met Detective Channing.

"Well, where to, now?" he demanded.

"Only up to the house to ask that girl another question or two," was Billy's response.

"Then you haven't given up yet, eh?" Channing asked with a smile.

"Nary a give up!" returned Billy, with a light laugh. "I'm going to git thar if I can, as they say it out West. How is it with you?"

"The same. I'd give the newest fifty-dollar bill you ever saw if I could get a clew to the owner of that coin."

"I don't doubt it, but am afraid you won't find him," and each went his way.

Billy gave a satisfied smile as he continued his course, and was soon at the scene of the murder again.

Tilly Tucker was still in the house, there being no one else to take charge, for, by the way, Mr. Worthmore did not seem to have a relation living.

The girl answered the door, and at sight of Billy she smiled.

"More questions?" she asked.

"Exactly; may I come in?"

"Certainly, for I suppose there will be no end to them," and she led the way to a sitting-room where Billy took a seat and prepared to interrogate.

"Miss Tucker," he asked, "did your master wear boots, or shoes?"

"What a question!"

"A strange one, but all the same, important. If I remember rightly, I saw boots in his room on the morning when he was found dead."

"Yes, sir, he wore boots; but for the life of me I can't see what that has got to do with finding out who killed him."

"It may have a good deal to do with it. Now, did he have those boots made to order? Can you tell me that?"

"Yes, he did; he wouldn't wear any other kind."

"Good! Now, did he get a new pair some time recently before his death?"

"Yes, sir; he got a new pair that same week. He had just thrown away his old ones and taken his Sunday ones for every day."

Billy was coming at it now.

There could be no doubt about the Russian, or the place where Mr. Worthmore had met him to play chess, he decided.

"Good again!" he said with satisfaction. "Now, an important question: can you tell me where he had those boots made?"

"No, I can not tell you that, sir. I do not know."

Billy had hardly hoped to gain that point, and was well enough satisfied with what he had been able to get.

"Well, I must find that out some other way, then," he averred. "I'm much obliged for what you have told me."

"You're welcome, Mr. Weston. I can tell you something else, now, too; something you asked me about once before."

"What is that?"

"Mr. Worthmore's will."

"Ha! has that come to light?"

"Yes. The lawyer was here this morning. He says a big share of the property has been left to me!"

"Whew! You're in luck, Tilly! If I wasn't engaged already I don't know but I'd set my

cap for you. As it is, suppose I look up a substitute for you?"

The girl laughed, but was rather confused by his boldness.

"No, you need not trouble yourself," she protested. "Isn't it strange, though, that Mr. Worthmore should have thought of me in that way?"

"No, I don't know that it is, since he seems to have had no one else to leave it to."

"But, to leave so much to me. He couldn't have done better by me if I had been his own child. To tell you truly, he's left it nearly all to me. I don't tell you this to boast, but because I don't have many friends to talk to. Please do not tell any one."

"No, I'm mum about it. I'm glad to hear of your good fortune. Have you any brothers or sisters to share it with?"

"Not one; I'm all alone."

This was said in a saddened tone.

"Then you will have to get married," declared the detective, "and make some deserving fellow happy."

He laughed lightly as he said it, and soon departed, but as he walked away he began to reflect that it was rather strange this girl should have been provided for so handsomely.

Half an hour later he was at the shop of Polarovsky the shoemaker.

The shop was in a basement, with a large window in front in which were displayed some samples of the art of this disciple of Crispin.

Looking in at the upper part of the window, a view of the interior was to be had, and it was only natural that passers-by should glance in. So it had come that Silent Seth had made his discovery.

Billy had looked around for his new ally as he approached, but not seeing him had concluded rightly that the Russian had gone.

Descending the few steps, he opened the door of the shop and entered.

The proprietor was reading a paper printed in some foreign language, while a cobbler on a bench was pegging away for dear life.

The proprietor seeing a stranger enter, dropped the paper and rose to do the honors of his humble establishment.

"Mr. Polarovsky?" Billy questioned.

"Yes, sir," was the response, with an accent we will not attempt.

"I have called concerning that last pair of boots you made for Mr. Worthmore a couple of weeks ago."

"Yes, I made him pair boots. Poor man! Too bad he was killed like he was, so cowardly way. That murderer ought to be burned alive. But, what about the boots?"

Billy had gained his point, so the question of the boots was of no further importance.

"I only wanted to make sure this was the place," he responded. "There was a Russian here with whom Mr. Worthmore played chess. What has become of him?"

Billy saw, or fancied he saw, a look of half alarm come over the face of the shoemaker.

"I don't know what you mean," the shoemaker declared.

"Well, I mean the Russian called Ludvik, with whom Mr. Worthmore played chess when he came here. Don't deny it, now."

The man was looking at Billy keenly, and suddenly he caught sight of the coin he was wearing on his chain and the expression of his face told that he recognized it!

He looked up at once, as if to see whether Billy had noted it or not, and Billy led him to think he hadn't.

"Well, he played chess with me," he confessed, after a moment.

"Your name isn't Ludvik, is it?"

"No; but I am the man that played chess with him. But, how you know that? What you want find out, anyhow?"

"No matter how I know it, I must see that man. You know where he is, and I hope you will give me his address. You won't lose anything by it."

"But, who are you?"

"I come from Mr. Worthmore's house."

"And what is it you want with that man you call Ludvik?"

"That is for him to bear when I see him. He might not want it known openly."

"Well, he is not here, has not been here, but if you want to leave any word I will give it to him if he should call. Tell me what."

"I have no word to leave. I must see him himself."

"Well, I don't know where you will find him, then. He may not come here any more."

"You began by saying he had never been

here, and that you did not know anything about it. Now you admit that he was here. Of course he was here; I know that as well as you do."

Billy regretted now that he had played his hand so openly.

He could not know whether his Silent Shadower, as he had come to call Seth, had followed the man, or had missed him and returned to the office.

It was plain that this man Polarovsky had taken alarm, and probably as soon as Billy was gone he would send word to the suspected man and thus put him on his guard and give him a chance to escape.

"But, he is not coming any more, sir."

Proof, in that, that Billy's reasoning was near the truth.

"He was here not an hour ago," Billy went on, as if not noticing the other's remark. "He was playing chess, and there is the board he played with. You may as well tell me where to find him, for I am bound to see him some way or other. See here, do you recognize this?"

Billy had taken in about everything the shop contained, and had discovered the board on one of the shelves.

And now, having seen that the man had noticed the gold coin and recognized it, it was that which he held up to sight as he spoke.

"No, I don't know it," the man averred.

"You never saw it before?"

"No, sir; never!"

"All right, then; it can't belong to your friend Ludvik, and there's no use my trying to restore his watch charm to him. I will bid you good-day, Mr. Polarovsky."

And with that he went out, leaving the puzzled and astonished Russian staring at the door after he had closed it. He did not stand idle long, however, for he opened the door the next moment and thrust his head out to look after his strange late visitor.

Billy was walking off at a rapid pace, and in a moment the shoemaker had the satisfaction of seeing him turn a corner.

CHAPTER VIII.

HAPPY HARRY TAKES A HAND.

WHEN the Silent Shadower returned to the shoemaker's shop, after reporting to Billy, as shown, he walked past the window leisurely to see if the man was still there.

He was there, but was no longer playing chess.

The other player was not to be seen, and the Russian was standing up, his hat on, and seemed to be talking to the proprietor.

Silent Seth passed on, but stopped after he had gone a little distance and secreted himself in a doorway to await the appearance of the man he was to shadow.

In a few minutes he appeared, and turned up the street in the opposite direction.

The Silent Shadower allowed him to get a little distance away, and followed.

The man was tall, rather spare, and was clad in every-day American dress. He carried a cane, and walked slowly as if time was no object to him.

Presently he turned down another street, continuing on in the same manner, until finally he entered a house and the trail seemed at an end. Silent Seth however waited.

Presently a girl appeared at the door of the house with a pail and mop in hand, and began cleaning the stoop.

Seth walked up and addressed her.

"What was that man's name that went in here a minute ago?" he asked.

"What man?" the girl asked, looking around at the questioner as if to demand what it was to him, anyhow.

"That tall man with the cane," Seth explained. "His first name is Ludvik, but I can't remember his other name. What is it?"

"Ivanovitch."

"Please say it slower."

"His name is Ludvik Ivanovitch."

"That's what I wanted to get hold of. He lives here, of course?"

"Yes, he lives here, that is to say, he boards here, which is all the same in Dutch. What do you want with him?"

"Nothing."

The girl straightened up and looked at the boy in surprise.

"What do you mean by comin' here and bothering me for, then?" she hotly demanded. "For a cent I'd chuck this pail o' water over ye."

But Seth was moving off. There was no reason for tarrying longer. He had gained his point.

Repeating the name several times to make

sure of it, he left the neighborhood and made his way to the office.

There, to his surprise, he found the door locked and Happy Harry absent.

It had been arranged that should Harry have occasion to go out, in the absence of the others, he was to leave his key in a certain place, in order to give Silent Seth the means of getting in; so Seth secured the key, and opening the door, entered the office to find on the desk this note:

"Boss:-"

"I am on another lay, same case. Will be back just as soon as I have holed the game. H. H."

"Another lay, eh?" Seth's thoughts ran. "Wonder what that can be? Hope he has struck something good, for I like Harry. Hope he'll do even better than I have done."

He sat down to do duty as office boy until the return of the others, or one of them.

He was eager to see Billy to report.

In the meantime what had taken Happy Harry out? He had gone on business, as his note left for Billy indicated.

Harry was alone in the office, poring over a book, some time after Seth and Broadway Billy had gone out, when the door opened and a stranger, a man, came in.

"Mr. Weston in?" he asked.

"No, sir," was the prompt response.

"How long before he will be in?"

"Give it up. It may be quite a little time."

"Um. I wanted to see him. Wanted to engage his service."

"Well, sir, you can leave your card and Mr. Weston will wait for you if you will set an hour for another call."

"I guess I'll do that. I haven't a card, but you can tell him my name is Jarvis Bunting and that I'll call again about four o'clock. I want to see him sure, if he can wait."

"All right, sir."

"And if he can't wait, tell him to set an hour when I can see him."

"Yes, sir; I'll see to it."

"You might mention that I want to see him about that mysterious Worthmore case. I may be able to put him on the right track, for I think I know something no one else has thought of."

"Crackers an' cheese!" exclaimed Harry. "You don't say so!"

"Why, you seem to be interested in it too, my boy. What do you know about it?"

"Don't know half as much as I'd like to, you bet!"

"Has your employer discovered anything new, that you know of?"

"Give it up. I'm only his scrub, you know; I'm not s'posed to know what's going on, but I know he'll be glad to get anything you can tell him."

"Well, tell him what I have said, and I'll be around again at four. I think I can open his eyes a little."

"Why haven't ye told the police?"

"Because the papers said Mr. Weston had the inside track of them all, and if he knew anything he was keeping it to himself."

"Jest so. Well, I'll tell him."

The stranger took his leave, and as soon as the door closed Happy Harry cut a pigeon wing in the middle of the floor.

"Crackers an' cheese!" he muttered. "Here's a new departure, sure as cats kill rats. Who and what is this feller? Reckon I'd better get onto his haze, 'fore he gets gone."

Springing to the desk he wrote the note which Silent Seth found, later on. That done, he hastened out, closed the door, and, putting the key in the nook where he had been told to leave it, was off.

As he went down the stairs he adjusted a mustache to his lip, one that was fitted with a spring so that it could be taken off or put on instantly at pleasure, for he had no desire to be seen and recognized by the man he was after.

He had made haste, as of course he had to, and as soon as he reached the street he looked for his man.

There he was, not far away, moving leisurely down the street.

Harry was after him at once, without any fear of being known if seen, for the mustache made a great alteration in his looks.

The man was young, being not more than twenty-five, to judge by appearance, and was quite well-dressed. He had a keen look, and Harry sized him up, in mind, as being a sharp fellow.

He went on at a moderate pace until he came to a hotel, where he sauntered in.

The Beagle followed, and was led through the

arcade to a staircase near the rear which opened upon the billiard saloon below.

Down this staircase went the man, and down went Harry, now almost up with him, and the man turned and looked at him, to which Harry paid not the least attention, not noticing the look.

Reaching the bottom the man stopped to look around, and after a moment's pause passed around one side and sat down by another man, one who was some years his senior. Harry, meantime, stood watching the games in progress. There were players at a good many of the tables.

While Harry was apparently watching the tables, though, he had his eyes upon the two men.

He noticed that as soon as the young man sat down they fell into conversation, something apparently of interest.

Moving around that way, gradually, Harry purposely courted a mishap.

He got in the way of one of the players, and was advised, with considerable vehemence, to get back out of the way.

This he hastened to do, and backing out of the way of the cues, dropped into a chair right beside the man with whom the self-styled Jarvis Bunting was talking.

He had gained his object, and now he pricked up his ears.

Leaning over upon his hand, on the side of his chair furthest from the pair, he seemed intently absorbed watching the progress of the play.

"You have no doubt about it, eh?" the younger man was saying.

"Not the least sir," answered the older man, in a deep voice. "It can be done like a charm."

"Well, we'll chance it, anyhow, on your opinion. It would be bad to make a mess of it, though. As soon as you see a doubt arise we'll draw out."

"Of course. We don't want to proceed unless upon a certain thing. I'll be on the watch for that. You do your part well and there will be no danger of anything else."

"I'm to go back at four."

"Very good. Give him your story straight, and make a good impression upon him to begin with."

"I guess I can do that. They say he's only a youngster, anyhow, and I'll bet he can't beat me at a game at wits. If he does I'll eat my hat, that's all."

"Don't boast and don't underrate him. From what I have heard he is a young terror. He's a detective born and bred. If there wasn't something in him you may be sure Byrnes wouldn't patronize him."

"No, I suppose not; but, we'll see."

"And then, after suspicion has been thrown in the right channel, you must offer to compromise with the girl and so win her regard. Of course the fellow will get free, but that will probably end everything of his prospects, and you will come in to play your cards. I don't see a thing in the way of success. I think you are bound to win."

"Well, I hope so, anyhow, for I have a good deal at stake."

CHAPTER IX.

GETTING A FOOTHOLD.

FOR a little time, after, Harry caught nothing of interest to him, and consequently it could not be of great interest to our story.

Presently, however, something was said that caused him to open his ears with renewed attention. He wanted to hear what response would be made to the observation he had caught.

"It is mighty strange who did kill the man, though, isn't it?" the younger man had just remarked.

"Yes, strange indeed," was the response. "It is a baffling mystery. But, it is better so, for just there lies our strongest hope for success."

Happy Harry felt a little disappointed, for he had been telling himself that these men must know something about the murder, if they were not, in fact, actually concerned in it.

With that suspicion in mind, he had dreamed of coming in ahead of either Billy or Silent Seth, clearing the suspicion from the Russian and putting the crime right where it belonged.

But now that hope had faded, and he had to admit that Billy must be on the right scent, after all. In that case Silent Seth would wear the victor's crown when the game ended. It was plain, from their own words, that these men knew nothing about the crime.

"And if any clew should fall our way, it will be to our best interest to conceal it."

So observed the younger man, continuing the talk.

"Of course. But do not be alarmed as to that, for you are not likely to get hold of the clew. Where all the detectives in New York have failed, you are not going to find anything. But, come; let's try a turn at pool to pass away the time till four."

They arose and crossed over to a vacant table, and Happy Harry's career of usefulness was cut short for the time being.

"Crackers an' cheese!" he exclaimed to himself, "what sort of a consarned diffiklity have I tumbled onto, anyhow? What are these two blooming roosters up to? I give it up. I'll have to let the boss rassle with it. It's too hefty for me."

Realizing that he could do nothing further there, he made his way leisurely out and returned to the office.

Feeling for the key where he had left it, and finding it gone, he knew some one was in and removed his false mustache and entered.

Silent Seth was there, but Billy had not yet returned.

"Hello, Sphinx!" Harry greeted. "What have you discovered? Anything new or'sprisin'ly strange?"

"Nothing much. I've found out what the Russian's name is."

"And you call that nothin' much! Crackers an' cheese! what would you call a big discovery, anyhow?"

To which the Sphinx made no response.

"Well, what's his name, then?" Harry inquired.

"Ludvik Ivanovitch."

"Ludivanvika— Jerusalem! say it again, Seth!"

The other repeated the name, slowly and distinctly.

"Crackers an' cheese!" ejaculated Harry. "How you ever got home with it all is more'n I can see. If it had been me I'd 'a' lost a pocketful of it along the way."

The Silent Shadower had nothing to add, greatly to Harry's annoyance. He wanted him to talk—to tell how and where he had learned the name.

"I wish you had something to say all the time, Seth," he declared, almost angrily.

Seth looked at him in a questioning way, but did not waste words to inquire what he meant by that. Harry answered, just the same.

"Because then you would talk," he explained. "I might as well come in here and talk to the chairs as to talk to you. Why don't you talk more and be more agreeable?"

"I mean well, Harry, but it's no use trying to talk when I have nothing to say; it's no use at all."

"S'pose it's all right, Seth, but I can't get it through my head how it is. I ain't built that way, that's sure. Now I'll tell ye what I have been doin'."

Thereupon Harry related the experience he had had, together with his ideas concerning the new development, and so they continued in a rather one-sided conversation until Billy came in.

In the mean time Broadway Billy himself had been making progress.

No sooner had he turned the corner and got beyond sight of the Russian shoemaker, as stated at the close a preceding chapter, than he stopped short.

Casting a quick look about him, he selected an open hallway for his purpose, and, dodging into it, made a hasty change in his appearance. He came forth in white hair and beard.

Walking with his hands clasped behind his back, and his shoulders bowed, he appeared to be an old man. His gait was a shuffling one, and he played the character to perfection.

Retracing his steps, he showed himself around the corner again, and was just in time to see the shoemaker emerge from his shop.

Billy felt secure in his disguise, but seeing the man coming straight toward him he knew it would be put to the test.

They met, but Polarovsky was in haste and did not give the seeming old man more than a passing glance.

They passed, and in a few moments Billy turned round to follow.

Apparently he did not look up, but he was watching the shoemaker to see if he turned around.

That he did not do, but pressed on to the corner, where he stopped and looked down the street in the direction in which he had seen Billy turn.

Of course the young man was not to be seen,

and satisfied that he was not around, Polarovsky hastened off in the direction that had been taken by the other Russian, some time before.

The shoemaker did not look back, but forged straight ahead until he came to the place of his destination, the house where the suspected murderer was lodged.

There he sprung up the stairs and rung the bell.

Billy stepped out of sight, not wanting to be seen, but was where he could see what was going on.

The door was opened, and after a word or two Polarovsky disappeared within, when Billy stepped out into sight once more and advanced to the house.

He noted the number as he passed, slowly, and the manner of house it was; certain signs which he was quick to interpret leading him to the conclusion that it was a place of furnished lodgings.

Passing on up the street for a little way, he stopped, and taking his stand in a suitable place, waited and watched.

In about five minutes Polarovsky appeared again, and went back the way he had come.

He was now in less haste, and it was plain that his business was done.

When he was gone, Billy made his way back toward the house, stopping at a point somewhat nearer to it.

He had guessed what the shoemaker's errand had been, and, if he was not mistaken in that guess, he would soon see the Russian leaving the house.

He believed the shoemaker knew the man's secret; perhaps he had been his accomplice in the crime, and had come to warn him to get himself out of reach as speedily as possible.

Billy was not mistaken.

Presently the door opened, and out stepped a tall man, a fellow answering to the description Silent Seth had given of the Russian."

Billy knew him on sight, and was glad for the opportunity to get a look at him. That Silent Seth had been right in his conclusion he had no doubt. This was beyond doubt the owner of the coin.

The man carried his cane, as before, but this time he was further burdened with a big valise, some coats, and an umbrella.

"Sweet pertaters!" Billy said to himself in his old way, "he is playing the Arab, sure enough; he is taking up his bed and walking. But, was it an Arab? No matter, though."

It was plain enough.

The man had taken alarm, and was moving out. A little more and Billy would have lost all Silent Seth had gained, of which he knew nothing yet, however.

The Russian walked for a little distance, then took a car, and ere long was in another quarter of the city entirely. Billy had followed, and had located him in his new lodgings, as he believed it to be.

On that point he must be sure.

Stepping up to the door, after the man had been within for some time and did not re-appear, he asked:

"Do you take lodgers here?"

"Yes, sir," was the answer; but in a tongue so broken that he could hardly understand.

"Can I get a room?" the detective next asked.

The response to that he could not comprehend, since it was in some foreign tongue. He shook his head, and something was said then in English to the effect that the rooms were all taken.

There was nothing for Billy to do but go away, which he did, returning to the office.

He had noted carefully the street and number, and did not believe the man would make another move unless further alarmed.

It had been a question with Billy whether to arrest him or not. He had the power to do so, of course, but it was a question of prudence. Perhaps a little delay would bring further proof against him.

He had, too, promised the inspector he would inform him of any discovery he might make, and felt bound to keep his word.

When he reached the office he found his Beagles there awaiting him.

"Crackers an' cheese!" cried Happy Harry, at sight of him. "If you had stayed away much longer I'd 'a' ba'sted sure. I've got a story a yard long to tell ye. But, I'll let Seth talk first, 'cause he is brief and to the point."

Billy turned to the Silent Shadower.

"I suppose you missed your game, eh, Seth?" he observed.

"No, sir," was the answer; "I found the man, followed him to his boarding-place, and found out what his name is."

"What! You got his name?"

"Yes, sir. He boards at Number — street, and his name is Ludvik Ivanovitch. You see, sir, that fits the monogram."

"Silent Seth, you are a good one," Billy complimented, while he looked upon the boy with admiration. "Harry, you will have to water that laurel bush of yours, sure enough."

CHAPTER X.

JARVIS BUNTING UNFURLS.

HAPPY HARRY smiled in a satisfied way.

"Our silent partner is a hummer, and no mistake," he agreed with Billy. "I am proud of him, you bet. I hope he'll get as big and as great as Alexander was, and make this combination just whirl."

"I think he is in a fair way," said Billy. "But, Harry, what is the tale you have got to unfold?"

"It's a reg'lar lion's tail," Harry declared. "It's a yard long, with not a twist in it from root to tip. I have got onto the unwritten work of this secret order o' ornery crooks, or some of it, anyhow. Give me your ears, now, and I'll unwind my story."

Their ears, or Billy's at any rate, were given accordingly, and Happy Harry told what had taken place, giving everything he had been able to learn.

Broadway Billy listened with interest.

"This certainly opens a new chapter in the romance," he declared. "Here is a side issue, sure enough. I might consider it the main trail, but for two reasons."

"And what's them?" asked Harry.

"Well, in the first place they admit that the murder is a puzzle to them, so it is plain they had no hand in it. Then, too, the suspicion against this Russian is growing stronger all the time. He is dodging the police like a hunted rabbit in a bog. But, what is their game?"

"You'll find out when he comes here at four."

"I'll certainly try to. And it is near four now. Seth, I want you to go back and shadow your Russian further."

"Yes, sir."

"You won't find him at the place where you left him."

The Silent Shadower showed no surprise at that, but waited in silence for further instructions.

He was a puzzle to Billy, this silent, imperious boy.

Billy then told what he had been doing himself, giving Seth the present address of the wily Russian, and the Silent Shadower set out.

"What am I going to do?" asked Happy Harry.

"I'll find work for you presently," answered Billy.

"Seems to me Seth is gettin' all the plums," Harry complained.

"What! Not getting jealous, Harry?" Billy exclaimed. "That won't do."

Harry smiled to prove that he didn't mean it, but Billy saw that under the smile there was a thorn.

"You wouldn't expect me to send you after the Russian, would you, when he is Seth's own game? You have got your own foxes to hunt, Harry."

"Did I do right, in followin' that feller, boss?"

"You did perfectly right," Billy approved. "I tell you what it is, Harry, in you and Seth I believe I have got a pair of Beagles to be proud of. You have both got the right detective knack about you."

This little praise made Harry all right again, and put him on his mettle for further efforts.

They talked together until four o'clock, when there came a step without and a hand tried the door.

The latch had been put on, with a purpose, and while Billy now rose to open the door Happy Harry dodged into the wardrobe.

This had been previously arranged, so that the man might believe he had the detective all alone. Billy opened the door and Mr. Jarvis Bunting stepped in.

Broadway Billy gave the man a keen, swift survey.

He found him to tally pretty closely with the description Happy Harry had given of him.

"Take a seat, Mr. Bunting," he said.

"Are you Mr. Weston?" the man asked, taking a chair.

"I am, sir."

"And you know me?"

"By the description my boy gave me of you."

"Ha! I see. That fellow must have a pair of eyes in his head. I suppose he told you the nature of my business with you, eh?"

"He did."

"Well, it is as I told him. I believe I can help you regarding this great Worthmore matter."

"If you can do that, sir, I shall be glad to hear from you."

"To begin with, I will state that I am a relation of the dead man's, the only living relation, so far as I know. I believe I am his heir."

"You have been a good while coming to the front, have you not? Why have you not appeared before?"

"It was only yesterday that I learned of the crime."

"That is strange. The papers have been full of it. Where have you been?"

"That is just it, sir. I do not read the papers, and would probably not know of it yet if my attention had not been called to it."

"Well, that point is clear enough, then. Now, Mr. Bunting, what can I do for you?"

"That I will now explain."

The young man squared himself in his chair for the effort.

He was cool and calm, and had his wits fully about him. He meant to close Broadway Billy's eyes.

"As I said," he began, "I am a relation of the murdered man's. His sister, older than he, was my grandmother. All the rest of the blood, so far as I know, is run out. My lawyer tells me I am the only heir."

"I follow you."

"It was my lawyer who called my attention to his death—Mr. Worthmore's, I mean. Lawyers are cute fellows, you know. He wants me to come into my rights, and then he expects to feather his nest out of my plumage. I am onto his game, though, and all he will get will be a just fee."

"Perfectly right, sir."

"Of course. Now, I am not sentimental enough to say I don't want this property that is going begging for a lost heir to come and gather it up, for I do want it. What is more, I am going to have it, if possible. I am told, however, that it has been willed to the old gentleman's servant girl, and of course I shall have to fight for it. You see how it is."

"I see, sir."

"Still, if my claim is admitted, I will not be too hard on the girl. I will compromise with her, and so settle the matter for good."

"I fail to see how this has anything to do with the murder mystery."

"I am coming at that now. I said I would compromise the matter, but in saying that, I mean I will do so if everything proves to be all right and fair. If not, then I will fight, and fight hard."

"What do you suspect?"

"That this girl is not altogether innocent of that crime."

This was said in a hoarse, impressive whisper, to give it all the force and weight possible.

"Ha! then you think she has hastened the old man's death in order to come into the property the sooner, do you? There may be something in that."

"No doubt of it, in my mind."

Billy did not believe what he had hinted at, but was trying to lead the fellow on. He wanted him to think he was falling into his plans easily and without a suspicion of the game he was playing.

"But, surely the girl herself did not do the deed," he now remarked.

"I don't say she did," said Bunting. "She has a lover, though, a poor, miserable scamp, and it is likely enough that he has done it. That is the clew I wanted to put into your hands, Mr. Weston."

"Ha! now you are coming at it, sir. There may be something in all this. I begin to see daylight ahead, now. Let's look at it: This girl knows she will come into the property at the old man's death. For some reason she cannot marry until the old fellow dies. Perhaps he wouldn't allow her to do so."

"That was it."

"Exactly. Well, her lover has urged her, and she, as anxious as he, has at last listened to his plans for putting the old fellow out of their way. He has been let into the house, has done his work well, and next morning the girl gives the alarm and makes a Dickens of an ado about it. Mr. Bunting, perhaps you have put into our hands the very key to the problem."

Mr. Bunting was smiling in a very satisfied way.

He was tickled to note how well he had played his cards and how nicely this detective had fallen into his trap.

It was just possible, however, that he would

come to know Broadway Billy a little better before he was many days older. At present he had a high contempt for his ability.

"I believe I have put you on the right track, sir," the sharper declared. "I could have gone to the police with this, but from what the papers say—I have read up on the case since my attention was called to it—from what the papers say, you are the one best entitled to it."

"Well, I'm greatly obliged, I am sure."

As he sat talking, Billy was toying with his watch-chain, dangling the gold coin charm so that it could not help drawing the notice of the fellow.

Bunting looked at it more than once, but with no sign of recognition. But, Billy did not expect him to recognize it. That coin and the Russian were linked together, and it was the best proof of his guilt.

"And now you want to know what I want of you, of course," the man went on, after a pause for effect.

"Well, yes, for I am sure you are not altogether disinterested."

"Detectives always look at a matter in that light, and they are most always right. My interest, first, is to gain what is mine by right. Next, to put the crime where it belongs. Last, to carry out a personal end."

"And that is the real object of your visit here."

The fellow wormed a little uneasily.

"Well, maybe it was," he admitted. "I'll tell you. I am more than half in love with that girl, and if she will come to terms with me I will compromise with her. If she will marry me I'll give her half. If not, then I fight. What I wanted to see you particularly about was, to help me in this."

"And how can I help you?"

"Easily. We know," and he winked his eye, "that the girl had nothing to do with the murder herself. Maybe it was that lover of hers. That will be for you to decide. If anything does point her way, let it slip through your fingers. See? When I come into my rights, whether I marry the girl or not, I'll fix you nicely for the service. It's all fair and square, anyhow. See? See?"

And Broadway Billy saw.

CHAPTER XI.

INVESTIGATING MR. BUNTING.

HAPPY HARRY, in the wardrobe, was grinning from ear to ear, as he heard all that was said and saw how neatly his boss was "playing" Mr. Bunting.

"Crackers an' cheese!" he exclaimed under his breath, "that feller thinks he has caught a sucker, but I'll bet he will find he's got a stingaree when he goes to pull in his line."

Billy was silent for a moment.

"This scheme of yours won't be exactly regular, Mr. Bunting," he reminded. "It won't be a safe one for me to play."

"Money in it, though, my young friend; money in it."

"Maybe there is."

"It's a sure thing. My lawyer says he has a sure case, and whether I get the girl or not I am bound to get the property. She won't get a dollar of it, unless she comes to my terms."

"You are sure you can break that will?"

"So the lawyer says."

"And who is this lawyer of yours?"

"His name is Ridley Ruffle."

"Where does he dangle his shingle?"

Billy was purposely dropping into undignified language.

The fellow gave an address, which both Billy and Happy Harry made mental note of.

"And now this lover," Billy further asked, "where are we to look for him? What is his name?"

"His name is Watson Barlow."

"Where is his place?"

"An address was given."

"At first sight," Mr. Bunting went on, "you might take him to be true blue and fast color, but he ain't. He might even impose his goodness upon you for a time, but look out for him."

"We'll attend to Mr. Barlow. Well, I'll look into this clew, Mr. Bunting, and then I'll let you know what I think of it. Suppose you drop around and see me at the same hour tomorrow. I'll try and be here if I can."

"I'll be on hand. Do you know, Weston, I like you first rate, and I think we'll have no trouble getting on together." Another wink. "I'm bound to win, and then I'll make it all right with you. Mum is the word, you know, and you'll get all the glory."

"I'm mum, pard. See that you don't mention it."

"I won't, you bet. Ta-ta."

With that the fellow took his leave, and a look of keenest contempt came over Billy's face.

Out from the wardrobe sprung Happy Harry, and proceeded to execute his war-dance in the middle of the floor.

Before he had done Billy laid hold upon him and said:

"No time for dancing now, Harry. Out and after him, and learn all you can. I am going now to Headquarters. Go home as soon as the trail ends."

Harry was all business at once.

Springing to the wardrobe he made a change of coat and hat, and putting another mustache on, a different colored one this time, was out and away.

Billy smiled as the door closed after the lad, and nodded approvingly. He knew it would be next to impossible for the sharper to shake the young Beagle off his trail.

And as to the fellow's shrewdness, that was all in his mind. Mr. Bunting's story had been about as transparent a one as Billy had ever listened to.

"I think I can see right through him," Billy said to himself. "But, I'll take a look into what he has called my attention to and see if there is any ground for such a suspicion. I'm sure there isn't, though. The Russian is my mutton."

Closing the office in haste he hurried off to Headquarters.

He might be too late to see the inspector, but he would drop around anyhow before going further.

The inspector was in, and gave him his usual greeting.

"What luck?" he asked.

"Not very much, perhaps," answered Billy.

"But, you have discovered something; I can read it in your eye."

"Yes, I have discovered something, and have got several things on my mind to unload."

"Well?"

"With the aid of my boys I have found out the Russian and run him to his hiding-place."

"Ha! that so? What is his name?"

"His name is Ludvik Ivanovitch. He is a chess-player, and you see the name fits the monogram."

"And you didn't arrest him?"

"No; I thought we would be able to get more evidence if we watched him for a little while first."

"That is so, but there is the possibility that he may give your boys the slip. All boys are not what you were yourself, Billy."

"I know it, sir; in fact, I begin to think these young Beagles of mine are a good deal smarter than I ever was. Oh! I mean it; you wait till you see something of their doings."

The inspector smiled.

"Where is this Russian now?" he asked.

Billy told him.

"Well, I think we had better go and take him in. There is evidence enough to warrant his arrest, and we want to make a showing in the matter, you know."

"Just as you say, sir. I have got another trail to follow at the same time, now, and I'll tell you about that before you decide fully." And Billy told him about Mr. Bunting.

The inspector was thoughtful.

"Billy," he said presently, "there is a double game being played here. I am not so certain now that it was the Russian who killed Worthmore."

"You think Bunting had a hand in it?"

"It looks bad for him."

"But it is a mystery to him the same as to every one else." And Billy further told him how he knew that.

The chief studied long.

"Broadway Billy," he said, "you were not wrong in allowing the Russian a little more time. There are others concerned in this matter, somewhere. We must have 'em all."

"That's what I think."

"And I think I'll send Channing down to help you shadow the Russian."

"All right; the more the merrier. I'm going on the other lay just now, to see what there is in that."

"All the more reason why Channing should keep the Russian in sight, then. I will send him down without delay. Let me know how you make out, will you?"

"Yes, I'll drop in again. This is properly a police case, and I am in it only by chance anyhow. I hope we'll be able to clear it up pretty soon. It is getting a little provoking."

"A lucky chance you are in it, too, Billy. Well, do your best."

So they parted, and Billy laid his course in the direction of the scene of the crime.

His ring at the bell brought the girl, as on other occasions.

"More questions?" she asked at once.

"Yes, more questions, Tilly;" Billy responded, smiling.

"You needn't be quite so familiar, sir," she rejoined. "Call me Miss Tucker, if you please."

"All right, Miss Tucker. Are you going to ask me in? It won't take me long to ask the few questions I have this time."

"Then it won't hurt you to stand here," with a smile.

"All right. Well, to begin with, do you know a fellow named Jarvis Bunting? I see you do."

Her face told him that. A dark look had come upon it, and she looked as if she could willingly choke Mr. Bunting.

"Yes; I know him, the fool!" she snapped.

"What do you know about him?"

"I know he is a fool."

"He wants to marry you, I believe."

"His want will be his master, then, if he does."

"You prefer Watson Barlow, of course."

The tell-tale blush answered that.

"How did you come to know so much, Mr. Smarty?"

"We make it a business to pick up odds and ends of information."

"I should think you did. What has this sort of information got to do with your finding out who killed Mr. Worthmore?"

"I have come around to ask you if Watson Barlow didn't do it."

The girl was fairly dazed and overcome. She gave a gasp, as if for breath, and her face turned all colors rapidly. Billy's words had knocked her out completely.

"Wh—what do you mean?" she gasped.

"Didn't I make it plain enough?"

"But, you surely are not in earnest, are you?"

"Why not? Suppose I tell you that suspicion has fallen upon you and your lover."

The girl tried to smile, but it was a useless effort. She was frightened. Still, Billy could detect nothing of guilt in her manner.

"It is impossible," she declared. "If you knew Watson Barlow you would then understand that it could not be. And as for me, I loved Mr. Worthmore almost as though he were my father."

"Well, that suspicion has been hinted at," said Billy, "and I wanted to see what you would say to it. It was thought that perhaps you and he had put your heads together to get the old gentleman out of the way, so that you could marry as soon as you came into the property."

"Oh! Mr. Weston! How could you!"

"I don't say it was my own suspicion, Miss Tucker."

"Then whose was it? Who has dared to breathe such a thought? It is shameful."

"What do you know about Jarvis Bunting? Was he—"

"Ha! He's the one that started it, the wretch! I could scold him with a good will."

"He is some relation to your dead master, is he not?"

"Him? No more than you are. He's a coward, a rascal, and worse! I despise him!"

And her face went to prove that she did.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MANY-SIDED MYSTERY.

As has been said, Billy could detect nothing of guilt in the young woman's manner.

He was a good judge of character, was Billy, and it was not often that he made a wrong estimate. Still, he would test the girl further.

"And now this lover of yours," he said, "where will I find him? It is my duty to go and see him, to judge of him for myself. You see, everything has to be investigated."

"I'll give you his address, willingly," answered the girl; and so she did. "I am not afraid to have you find him. Go, by all means, and satisfy yourself about him. I know you will dismiss the suspicion at once after you have talked with him. I know him."

"Yes, it is to be supposed you would."

"I know him too well to doubt him. I had rather think Jarvis Bunting himself the guilty one."

"Well, I won't trouble you any further now," said Billy. "If the police come to see you about the same matter, talk to them the same as you have talked to me and they won't bother you long."

"All right, let them come if they want to; I'm not afraid of them."

Billy went away completely satisfied in mind.

that this girl was altogether innocent of any share in the crime.

In fact, he had had no thought otherwise, as will be remembered. He had been impressed with her innocence at the very outset, when he had best opportunity to detect her.

Taking his leave, he set out to find Mr. Barlow.

It was necessary that he should see him and form an estimate of his quality, since his attention had been called to him.

There was, of course, the possible chance that he had done the deed without the knowledge of Tilly Tucker, though Billy had no idea that such was the case. Still he would see Mr. Barlow.

He found him at the address given, attending to his office duties, being employed as shipping clerk in a large store.

When the man had been pointed out, Billy went to him and asked him to step aside for a moment.

He then displayed his badge, and demanded:

"Watson Barlow, what do you know about the murder of Jabez Worthmore?"

The young man gave a great start, and his face blanched. He looked at the young detective in a dazed manner.

"Why, I don't know anything about it, sir," he declared. "That is, nothing further than everybody else knows. Why do you ask me? Am I suspected of the horrible crime?"

Billy studied him closely at that.

Here was something he had not looked for. What had led the man to ask that question so suddenly?

"Do you know of any reason why you should be suspected?" he counter-questioned.

"Only the fact that I was in the house that same evening, sir, as I suppose you have learned."

Here was another surprise for Billy.

He had not learned this, and his thoughts flew rapidly.

Why had Tilly Tucker kept this bit of information from him? But, it was instantly plain. To have disclosed it would have been to draw the attention of the detectives to her lover.

"And the fact that you were there," said Billy, not letting on that it was news to him now, "has been kept very quiet. What was the object in that? Is there any good ground for supposing that you might know something about the matter?"

"Perhaps, if you look at it in that light, I can explain it, though. I am innocent of all knowledge of the affair, I assure you. Mr. Worthmore came in about half-past nine, and half an hour later I left the house. Mr. Worthmore was alive and well then."

"How do you know he was?"

"He called down to Miss Tucker to be sure and secure the door."

Billy snatched off his hat and scratched his head. If the door had been so looked after, how had the murderer gained entrance?

Was it possible, could it be possible, after all, that Tilly Tucker and her lover did know something about the crime? But, no, the thought was opposed to his every instinct.

"Do you know whether Miss Tucker did lock the door or not?" he asked.

"Yes, I do. I heard the lock click as I descended the steps after bidding her good-night."

"Then how in the name of mystery did the murderer get into the house. The young woman said the door was unlocked when she discovered the crime."

"You ask me too much. I have been puzzling my head over it, but have had to give it up."

While talking, Billy was toying with his watch charm to make the man notice it.

That he presently did, but without a sign of recognition.

Billy had not expected any.

"Do you know Jarvis Bunting?" Billy immediately asked, after the man's last quoted response.

"Yes, the rascal, I know him," was the prompt reply.

"Some relation to Mr. Worthmore?"

"Not a bit, that I ever heard of. I don't believe he is. He's certainly unworthy to be, for Mr. Worthmore was a gentleman."

"Which Bunting is not?"

"Decidedly not."

"Would you think him capable of such a crime as murder?"

"Well, no, I cannot say that I would. That is going too far, for a fellow who is a coward at heart."

"How about robbery?"

"Well— But, no, I will not say it. I have

no right to strengthen any suspicion you may entertain against him."

"Your very words would serve to strengthen a suspicion, did I have any. I am not prepared to say that I have a suspicion against him, however. Not so much of a motive can be brought against him as against you."

Billy was fishing now.

"Maybe I can enlighten you a little regarding the situation," offered Mr. Barlow. "Bunting and I have been rivals for Miss Tucker's hand. He knew she was heir to Worthmore's property, while I did not. If you suspect me, suspect him, also. But, I cannot believe he did the crime."

"Well, for the present I will drop it," said Billy. "As you are innocent, of course you will let events take their course. I may see you again a little later on. In the mean time say nothing."

A few words more and Billy took his leave.

Watson Barlow was left with something to ponder over. Was there anything in the world detectives did not turn over when following a scent?

Billy believed it was too late in the day to pay a visit to the office of the lawyer—said to be Ridley Ruffle.

As it was on his way, or at any rate not far out of his way, he decided to go there and take the chances of finding the man in.

He did so, and as he drew near he espied Happy Harry shadowing the number in which the lawyer was said to have his office, and knew what that meant.

Jarvis Bunting had come there, and Happy Harry had been close upon his track and was still hovering near.

Billy had donned a false beard, and walked leisurely along toward the house.

He gave Harry a sign as he passed him, and at a second glance Harry recognized him and responded.

The signal had been that Harry was still to keep on the trail, and Harry understood it perfectly well. Billy passed right on.

A little distance beyond the house, however, he stopped and sat down on a step as if to rest, where he remained until Bunting left the other house and went his way.

Waiting long enough to note how well Happy Harry was doing his duty, Billy got up and went straight to the lawyer's number.

The office was in what seemed to be a private house, and such it proved to be. It was the lawyer's own house, and his business sign was lettered on one of the front windows.

Billy went up the steps and boldly entered.

Whether this was the usual way or not, at that office, he did not know, nor did he much care.

Mr. Ruffle was in, Billy recognizing him at once from Harry's description.

"I have called upon a little matter of business, Mr. Ruffle," Billy immediately broached.

The lawyer looked over the top of his glasses, as if to see the better, taking a good survey of his visitor.

"You have the advantage of me, sir," said he. "I don't know you."

"I'll introduce myself, then," and Billy tore off his false beard. "I am Billy Weston, the detective."

Mr. Ruffle looked somewhat disconcerted for a moment.

"Glad to know you, sir," he presently said, offering his hand. "What is your pleasure? What can I do for you? Pray take a seat, sir."

"I want to know, before I go into this scheme," Billy came bluntly to the point, "just what proof you have that Jarvis Bunting has any claim upon Mr. Worthmore as kinsman."

"Ha! um. Well, Mr. Weston, we are dealing with facts in the matter. The situation is just as I presume the young man has told you. Mr. Worthmore was his great-uncle. We are sure of our ground, so you have nothing to risk in lending him what assistance you can."

"To be sure," said Billy. "But if anything should come under my observation to lead me to doubt his proofs, how much of an object will it be for me to be blind for the time being?"

Here was a "feeler," to give the lawyer the impression that he was with him for personal gain.

"All I will say now is that you will not lose anything, sir. But, don't be afraid to give the case your support, for there is no risk to be run. All our proofs are straight."

"Very well, I take your word for it," Billy decided. "Be sure you do your best to carry your point, for you cannot risk a lost case any more than I can. Do your very best, and I will

do the same." But with that Billy made a mental reservation concerning the direction in which he intended to do his best.

CHAPTER XIII.

ALL IN THE DARK ONCE AGAIN.

WHEN Billy left the office of the lawyer, whom he had set down for a scheming shyster, he felt very self-satisfied.

He believed he had pierced clear through the thin mask, and had discovered what was behind it. It was a scheme, he felt sure, to impose a fraudulent heir upon the Worthmore estate.

Further, he believed he had now set both the lawyer and the "heir" at ease respecting what they might expect from him, and that now they would go ahead with their game, and endeavor to carry it forward to the consummation. That was what he wanted them to do.

Now, what move next?

With his Beagles both on duty, he was free to devote himself in whatever direction he thought best.

He thought of visiting the lawyer who had Mr. Worthmore's will in charge, to inquire of him concerning Ridley Ruffle, and to post him respecting the scheme, if his suspicions proved right.

It was now too late in the day for that, however, for the lawyer would not be found in.

That being the case, he decided to go to the house where he had last seen the Russian, to learn what success Channing had met with. He doubted not but the Russian was now under arrest, but he wanted to be sure on that point, since, if not, it was because he had again moved his abiding place, and it was important to know whether Seth had been in time to shadow him.

He was approaching the house, where everything appeared to be quiet and orderly, with not a sign of a policeman in sight, when a paper was suddenly thrust into his hand.

Billy looked immediately at the person who had taken the liberty with him, and found it to be only a common bill-distributor.

He passed on, and as he walked he idly unfolded the paper to see what its import was.

Not that he cared; he did it idly, and without thought.

His curiosity was aroused, though, when he found a smaller paper folded and pinned within the larger.

Withdrawing the pin, he unfolded the inner paper and looked at it, when, to his great amazement, he found it was addressed to him, and he turned instantly to find the distributor.

The fellow had vanished.

To say that Broadway Billy was astonished, would be to express it mildly.

And he was still more surprised when he further unfolded the paper and read the following, written in pencil:

"MR. WESTON:—

"If you have any regard for your health, drop out of this man-hunt. We are in no mood to be trifled with. Consider this a fair warning, and profit by it. A word to the wise ought to be enough."

"Desperately, L. I."

"It is from the Russian," Billy said to himself. "How has he found out that I am after him? It seems that I have not been having it all my own way. And his agent recognized me in spite of my disguise. Billy Weston, you will have to be careful or there will be mourning at your wigwam."

He felt like kicking himself for one thing, and that was for looking around upon making the discovery that the note was addressed to him. But, that had been the natural impulse, and he was not to blame.

"Now, however, he was able to reflect that perhaps the man had not been certain of his identity, and had been in hiding to watch what effect the note would have upon him when he discovered it. If that had been the case, he had given himself away nicely."

"Well, there was no help for it," he told himself. "It was so sudden and unexpected that it knocked me out. Now what am I going to do? This game isn't one-sided, not by any manner or means, and it isn't pleasant to know you are being shadowed, as I undoubtedly am. So, the police haven't got Mr. Ivanovitch, after all. If they had, he wouldn't be free to send notes to me."

He went on toward the house, considering what he should do.

"May as well be hanged for a shark as a herring," he decided, "and here is for 't. I'll stop and ask for Mr. Russian."

That he did.

Upon making inquiry, though, he was told that Mr. Ivanovitch had gone away; that he

had been sent for in haste and had gone for good.

"And it was lucky he had, too," his informant added, "for he hadn't been gone a dozen minutes when the police came for him."

This was not the same person Billy had tried to talk with a little earlier in the day, of course.

"That settles it," Billy said to himself, as he went away. "Now, if Seth has failed to connect we are dumped. This thing is a good deal bigger than it was when we first sized it up, and it's growing. Wish I could see Channing to see how he feels about it."

His wish was speedily had.

He had not gone far when he met that gentleman face to face.

Both were in some measure disguised, but they recognized each other as they were about to pass.

"Well, did you get your man?" asked Billy.

"You know well enough we didn't," was the snapped response.

"How was that?"

"He wasn't there to get. I tell you, Weston, that fellow has got a whole detective force at his back."

"What makes you think that?"

"Look at this and see for yourself."

As he spoke he took from his pocket a paper very similar to that which Billy himself had received from the fellow on the street a few minutes before.

It read about the same, too, as follows:

"MR. CHANNING:—

"You had better drop out and not meddle with what does not concern you. Many a good man has come to grief by being over-curios. Take a gentle hint and draw off. Determinedly, L. I."

Broadway Billy laughed as he read.

"What are you grinning about?" Channing demanded.

"To think how helpless we seem to be in this affair," answered Billy. "See here."

He handed Channing the missive he had received.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" the detective cried.

"How and when did you get this thing?"

Billy explained.

"Same way I got mine. And the fellow was gone the next minute. Billy, I want to know what sort of a mess we have got into, anyhow?"

"It begins to look as if we have stirred up a hornets' nest," was the young Retriever's response.

"You are right. I never found anything like this before."

"You are going to drop it, of course."

"Drop it!" cried Channing. "I am going to have that Russian, Billy, if I have to scour New York to find him."

"Can you swear that he is in New York?" asked Billy.

The man's face darkened.

"Confound it, no!" he cried. "We have lost all trace of him, now. And no way of finding him, either, that I can see."

"And I have got slightly the advantage of you, too, for I have seen him," Billy reminded.

"Yes, that's so. And, if you run across him again you'll be wise enough to scoop him in, won't you?"

"I'll try it, anyhow. He would have been scooped before, if I had had any idea of this. That is, if his followers didn't down me when I tried it on, as perhaps they would have done."

"As likely as not, for he is well backed. Pleasant, isn't it, to know you are being shadowed by men unknown to you, and not to be able to put a finger on one of them."

"Yes, very. But, Channing, they made a mistake."

"In letting us know it, eh?"

"Exactly. Now, take your case: the inspector can set two or three good men to follow you about for the purpose of detecting the men who shadow you, and the first our Russian friend knows he will be in limbo."

"That's a good idea, Billy. I hadn't thought of it. But, what will you do? You haven't any one to do the same for you."

"Haven't I? I have got a pair of Beagles that are worth their weight in gold."

"You mean the boys?"

"Yes."

Channing smiled.

"You seem to have great confidence in boys," he observed.

"I know what boys can do," Billy responded. "I have some recollection of a chap called Broadway Billy. He could do work that I cannot do now. In order to have the advantage of his help I have found a fellow to take his place. My Happy Harry is as near what he used to be

as possible. And as for Silent Seth, as we call him, he is not second to Harry in anything. Get a good boy and try him, and you'll think as much of their help as I do."

"All of which speaks well for what Broadway Billy used to be."

Broadway Billy had his faults, Channing, but he generally got there in some fashion or other."

"Yes, that's so. Well, what are you going to do now?"

"I am going to give it up and go home. No use trying to work when you have nothing to work on, and know your every step is being dogged."

"I agree with you there."

They talked on for a few minutes longer, when they parted, each going his way.

Billy went home.

There he found supper and Happy Harry awaiting him.

"Hello, Harry," Billy exclaimed, "your trail was not a long one, it seems. Where have you been?"

"No, it wasn't long," agreed Harry, "but it was full o' meat. As I have somethin' to say I s'pose you'll 'low me to talk, won't ye?"

"Talk away, for I know you would die if you couldn't talk. You are not Silent Seth, by any means. What have you learned? Let me have the facts all in a lump. Go ahead."

Thereupon Harry told what he had been doing, and more at length than we have space to quote. He had followed Jarvis Bunting to his lodging-place, where, ascertaining that it was his lodging-place, he learned also that he was there known as Robert Shephard. There was something crooked about Mr. Bunting, sure.

CHAPTER XIV.

TAKES A SERIOUS TURN.

"AND there you gave up the trail, eh?" observed Billy, when Happy Harry had told his story.

"Yes, sir; didn't see any use waiting around any longer. We can pick up Mr. Bunting at any time, and I thought maybe you would have somethin' more 'portant for me to do."

"Well, you did right. I am anxious now to hear from Seth, for the Russian has given us the slip, and unless Seth was in time I am afraid he is lost and it may be a hopeless chance for our finding him again."

So, while they ate supper, Billy told all about the case and what had taken place.

"I'll tell you what it is," spoke up Roger Watts, "you will have to call on me yet, Billy, before you can bring this thing to a head."

"Wouldn't wonder if I didn't have to get out my whole force," answered Billy. "If I get you and Fatty-Skinny on the trail there will be something done, sure enough."

Mr. Watts, it will be remembered, was now the head of the family, having become Billy's father-in-law.

About the time the meal was over there came a ring at the bell.

"Wouldn't wonder if that's Seth, now," said Billy.

He pulled the wire that unlocked the door below, and soon after there came a timid tap at the door of the apartments.

Opening it for the applicant, Broadway Billy found there a ragged little urchin.

"Are you Mr. Weston?" the lad asked.

"That's my name," answered Billy. "What do you want?"

"Here's a note for ye, then."

With that the boy produced a piece of common brown paper and gave it to Billy and turned to go.

"Hold on just a second," Billy ordered.

He did not mean to let the messenger get away from him till he had found out whom the note was from, at least.

Opening it he read:

"MR. W.:—

"I've got him yet. You had better come."

"S. S."

And that was all. Not a word to tell him where he should come to. On turning the paper over, however, Billy found a street and number noted.

"Have you been paid for bringing this?" Billy then asked of the boy.

"You bet," was the response. "Wouldn't brought it at all if it hadn't been paid fer. I thought he was kiddin' me."

"All right, then, you may go now."

Billy turned back into the room, and the boy went off.

"Good for Seth!" Billy exclaimed. "He was in time, and our game is still in sight."

"And what are ye going to do?" asked Harry. "Why, I'm going there, of course."

"But, you said you s'posed somebody was shadowing you here; how will you shake him off?"

"I hadn't forgot that. I'm going to disguise and go out the rear way and get out upon the next street. I'll trick him once, anyhow."

"And what am I going to do?"

"You go there now, and be ready to help in whatever is needed. I'll put on my old man disguise and you'll know me."

"All right, I'm off, you bet."

"Here, take this basket with you," said Billy, "and go in the corner store with it. If they are watching you, too, you can baffle them by slipping out from the store by the side way."

"That's the stuff, but it isn't likely they care anything about a kid like me. It's only big game they want."

"Don't be too sure of that," cautioned Billy. "You may find yourself in their hands before you know it."

Harry went out with the basket, and Billy prepared his disguise.

In the mean time, Silent Seth had been putting in a good stroke of work in the interests of the case.

When he returned to the house where Billy had left the Russian, as Billy had directed, he had not been a great while there when the man left the house with his baggage in hand.

Seth followed him, until finally he located him in another house in an entirely different quarter of the city.

The man had not gone there alone, but accompanied by another man, and shortly after their arrival this man, and yet another left the house and went away in haste.

The Silent Shadower had made sure that neither was the Russian, and it was easy enough to be sure on that head, for neither was so tall as Ivanovitch. And being sure, he waited and watched.

The Russian did not appear, but after awhile other men began to go into the house, until at least a dozen had entered.

Seth made up his mind that it was high time for him to notify his master, and did so in the manner we have shown.

After that the silent partner had nothing to do but to wait and watch.

Time passed, and his stomach was beginning to suggest supper, but the boy had no idea of leaving his post for that.

Several more men had by this time entered the house, and Seth believed that a meeting of some sort or other must be in progress within. What it could be he had no idea.

He was still faithfully at his post when Happy Harry arrived.

Harry came along, and without appearing to notice Seth, sat down on the curb quite near to where the Silent Shadower was standing.

"The deuce is to pay, Seth," he remarked.

Seth was silent.

"Do you hear me?" Harry demanded.

"Yes."

"It's a wonder you wouldn't say so, then. I say the deuce is to pay."

"What's the matter?"

"The Russian has got his buzzards after Billy—I mean the boss, and are going to make it hot for him."

No comment.

"Why the dickens don't you say someth'n' so's a fellow kin know ye are alive?" Harry growled.

"I'm listening."

"Glad to know ye are. Well, they have warned him to draw out of the game or they will do him up, and I s'pose that means you and me, too."

"They'll find we don't scare."

"Hello! you did speak once, didn't you. You bet they'll find we don't scare worth a cent. But, Seth, you and I must see to it that our boss don't git hurt in this p'izen business."

"We'll try to, anyhow."

"He is comin' along pretty soon to see you, and I'll keep watch while you go and talk with him."

"I was waiting for you to tell me whether he got my note or not."

"Waitin' for me to tell ye! Why didn't ye ask me?"

"I knew you would tell all you knew, if I gave you enough time."

"Blast your impudence, anyhow, Seth! Say, you are the queerest boy I ever knewed in my life. I'll tell ye what you was cut out for, Seth!"

Seth waited to be told.

"You was cut out to be a high philosopher,

that's what. You had better give up this business and take up that branch o' study yet."

Seth smiled.

"Let's stick to business," he made response. "How would you know the man if you saw him?"

"By the description I have had of him from you and Billy."

"Well, here's a thought that's struck me: Spose you go and meet the boss and tell him how things are, and tell him to stop there at the corner. If he wants me to leave my post, I'll go there and see him while you watch. That is, if he's willing."

"All right, I'll do that. Don't talk too much while I'm gone, Seth; keep your jaws in working order to answer the questions the boss will want to ask."

Harry was off at once, Seth remaining determinedly on guard.

In about ten minutes Harry was back again.

It was that season of the year when the days are short, and it was growing dark.

"It won't work, Seth," Harry said. "Boss don't want you to lose sight of the man if he leaves the house, and he's afraid I might not get onto him sure enough to make a certain job of it."

"What then?"

Seth could ask that, since it was highly important that he should know at once what Billy desired him to do.

"Why, you are to tell me everything, and I'm to carry the word to him. Then he won't be seen here, but will be free to act in whatever way is necessary."

"That beats our plan all hollow, Harry. Tell him I have followed the man to this house, and that about a score of others have gone in. It looks as if they were having a meeting."

"Is that all? I expected you had a story a yard long."

"That's all of it, in few words. No use tellin' more than the bare facts."

"Mebby you are right, my royal philosopher. I'll carry the news to Mary in about two kicks of a sparrow."

And away Harry went.

When he neared the corner again he was just in time to witness something of an exciting nature.

He saw Broadway Billy in the grasp of two powerful men, and before he could do or say anything, saw him hustled into a carriage, in spite of his struggles, and the carriage was driven rapidly off.

What to do Harry did not know, for the moment.

To keep pace with the carriage was impossible; he was bound to lose it before he could follow it a block.

Then, too, it was too far away for him to raise an alarm. The next moment he saw a policeman running to the corner where the abduction had taken place, and decided to tell him all about it, who the abducted man was, and where the chief of the conspirators was to be found.

He set out on a run, but he had not taken a dozen steps when he, too, was seized, a blanket was folded around him, and before he could make an outcry he was in a carriage himself, and was whirling away somewhere. The case had taken a desperate phase, and the Russian and his followers had decidedly the best of it. What did it all mean, anyhow?

CHAPTER XV.

AMAZEMENT ALL AROUND.

SILENT SETH was the only one of the detective trio at liberty.

When Happy Harry left him, after hearing what report he had to make to Billy, the Silent Shadow watched him as he hastened away.

He was too distant to see what happened to Billy, since, as said, it was getting dark, but when the men seized Harry he was still in sight, and Seth witnessed that.

Seth was leaning idly against a lamp-post at the time, and although there was good occasion for his showing excitement, he exhibited none whatever. It was all done so quickly that it would have been useless for him to attempt to interfere, so he simply watched.

It was the same with him as it had been with Harry upon seeing Broadway Billy set upon and taken off. He could do nothing, since it was useless for him to try to follow.

"Here is a go," he said to himself, in mind. "If they have taken Harry they will certainly be after the boss, and me, too. I'll watch out a little, I guess."

Having noted the direction in which Harry

was taken, Seth looked about him keenly. Another carriage was approaching, quite near the curb, and two men were walking along abreast of it.

Seth made up his mind quickly what that meant.

He was in for it, sure.

Pretending not to be looking, he nevertheless kept close watch upon the two men, and as they drew near he saw them step a pace apart holding a blanket between them.

The imperturbable boy did not move, but waited for the full development of their scheme, and it soon came. With a bound the two men sprung at him, the carriage at the same time wheeling to the curb and stopping, and had he not been on his guard his fate would have been certain.

As it was, he simply stepped around the lamp-post, at the last moment, without the least appearance of haste in his movements, and the two men impulsively flung their blanket around the post, neatly baffled.

A muttered oath escaped each of them.

"What's the matter?" Seth coolly asked. "You fellows trying to steal lamp-posts?"

With another oath one of the men dropped his side of the blanket and made a spring at him, but Seth dodged, and diving under the horses' bellies put himself on the opposite side of the team.

Had this been Happy Harry, what a talking there would have been for a few minutes!

The men made one more effort, one springing to the rear of the carriage while the other went around in front of the team, but when they met their game had disappeared.

It had all taken place in a few minutes, yet already quite a number of persons were on the spot; and baffled, and not daring to remain longer upon the scene of their defeat, the men sprung into the carriage and were driven rapidly away, while Silent Seth was hanging underneath the vehicle.

In his case the game had worked in an entirely different way.

The carriage bowled along at good speed, as if to baffle pursuit, and was soon out of the neighborhood, leaving the witnesses to think what they might of the unusual proceeding.

Let us return to Broadway Billy.

Taken completely by surprise, there had been no chance given him to resist, and in less time than it takes to tell it he was in the carriage in the grasp of two powerful men.

As the carriage dashed along, he was bound and gagged, and so rendered utterly helpless.

Less than twenty minutes later the carriage stopped, and he was taken out. He found that he had been driven into an inclosed court, where his captors could act leisurely.

Billy had only a vague idea where he was. He was hurried into a house by the rear way, and immediately taken to a cellar where he was bound to a post, evidently for temporary safe-keeping. A single gas-jet was burning, and by its light he saw another man in his same fix.

That man was Detective Channing.

When he had been secured the men left him, and he and Channing were left to gaze upon each other's misery in silence, since both were gagged.

Not a word had been spoken, and they were left to think what they might of their possible fate. Their reflections were not by any means encouraging, needless to say.

Only a short time elapsed when steps were heard again, and another prisoner was brought in. This time it was Happy Harry, who shared the fate of his master and the other detective. There they were, helpless and at the mercy of their unknown foes.

We say unknown, because the case had assumed greater proportions than they had ever dreamed of, and they had stirred up a nest of hornets where they had looked for nothing of the kind.

It was about an hour later when one man was heard coming down into the den, and when he appeared it was found to be no other than the Russian, Ludvik Ivanovitch.

He advanced straight to Broadway Billy and removed the gag from his mouth.

"You have found," he said, "what it means to fight against me. You would not heed my warning, so you must suffer."

"You seem to have the best hand, that is true," answered Billy, in his cool way. "What do you intend doing with us? We are, naturally, somewhat interested in that direction."

"We intend to do you no bodily harm," was the answer. "We have outwitted you, and are satisfied with that. In forty-eight hours I leave

the country, and within two hours after that you will be set free."

"That is some satisfaction, anyhow."

"We have no intention of taking your lives, but we will hold you prisoners until you can do us no harm. You have worked well, but you have been fighting against some of the best detective talent of Russia. You have lost, while we have won. It is enough."

Billy was about to speak again, to demand some explanation, when he suddenly felt himself freed. A keen knife had severed his bonds. At the same moment—or the very next, more properly—a youthful form confronted the Russian, a revolver was presented at his head, and a voice declared, in low, but intense tone:

"If you move a finger you are a dead man!"
It was Silent Seth!

There was that about his threat which carried conviction with it, and the Russian hesitated. And in this case, to hesitate was to be lost.

The next moment Broadway Billy had sprung upon him, and handcuffs were upon his wrists. This, however, while it made the man helpless, could not prevent his giving an alarm, which he did.

No sooner had he handcuffed the man than Billy sprung to free Channing, while Seth did the same for Happy Harry, and in the next moment, when steps were heard hastening to the scene, the four were prepared to show fight. None of them had been disarmed as it happened.

"Let's act together," cried Billy, "and we have got them all. They will not dare to fire for fear of killing their friend."

"Dare they not?" cried the Russian. "I'll show you. I'll bid them shoot, for it will be sweet to die in the cause of Nihilism! You are not masters of the situation yet."

"Nihilists!"

So exclaimed Broadway Billy, in surprise. "Yes, Nihilists; as you well know. We have watched you ever since you were employed by the Russian consul to hunt us down."

"Hold!" cried Billy. "One word before we fight!"

The whole band were now in the cellar, and were covered by the weapons of Billy, Channing, and the two Beagles.

"I give you leave to speak that word," said the master of the band. "Then it will be a game of blood. Not a man of us but is ready to lay down his life, and we are more than four to one against you. Speak."

The coolness of the man was remarkable, but no more so than that exhibited by Broadway Billy and his backers.

"What I want to say is this," spoke Billy. "There is a mistake somewhere. You accuse us of being after you because you are Nihilists, and you think I am in the employ of the Russian consul. That is not so. We are simply after a murderer, and we have a clew that has led us to you."

"That is hard to believe, sir. But, explain, before this game of death begins. If bare one of us escapes alive it will be enough. Count the chances well before you precipitate the struggle."

Coolly spoken, as ever. It was a desperate moment.

"Listen to what I say, then," said Billy: "You have no doubt heard of the murder of Jabez Worthmore, who played chess with you in the shop of Polarovsky the shoemaker."

"Yes, unfortunate man, I have heard of that."

"Did you kill him?"

"If I kill him? Sir, you amaze me! I am as innocent of such a crime as you undoubtedly are."

"Do you recognize this watch charm?" calling attention to the coin upon his chain. "Is it not yours?"

"Where did you get that? Yes, I do recognize it; it is mine."

Broadway Billy and Detective Channing were amazed. Proof enough, this, that the Russian was not the murderer, after all.

"Well, sir," said Billy, "this charm was in the murdered man's hand when he was found dead in his room. You can readily see the suspicion which naturally followed."

"I see, sir, and I understand. But I do not see how you have traced it to me, for I have been very cautious in my movements. I can give you ample proof that I am innocent of all knowledge of the murder."

CHAPTER XVI.

ARRESTING THE CRACKSMAN.

"You say you are able to give me proof that you are not the murderer," observed Broadway Billy, keeping to the point.

"Yes."

"What is your proof, sir? If you are innocent, there is no reason why we should shoot holes into one another. You have admitted this watch-charm is yours. Can you explain how it came to be where it was found?"

"That charm was stolen from me, together with my watch and chain, on the very night the murder was committed."

"Can you prove that?"

"Yes."

"If you can prove it, of course that will clear you."

"The proof I would offer must be the testimony of one of my men here present. Will you accept that?"

"We will at any rate hear it, and will give weight to it according to its worth."

"That is all I ask. Bonoffsky, tell what you know. Gentlemen, this is one of the best detectives in our service. Hear him."

One of the men, a modest-appearing fellow, had stepped out from among the others with a bow.

"I have the honor of having been the immediate cause of your being here," he said. "I may also have the honor of practicing marksmanship with you if it comes to a fight which I hope it will not."

"Perhaps it will not, since it is plain there has been a misunderstanding all around," said Billy.

"What you have heard said is true," the man went on. "Mr. Ivanovitch was robbed of his watch and chain, and I have only just recovered them for him, except that charm you now wear, sir. I believed the robber was holding that back, but he insisted that he had been robbed of it himself in turn."

"And who was that man?" asked Billy.

"He is known as Claude, the Cracksman, sir."

"Claude, the Cracksman!" cried Channing. "Weston, it is altogether probable that he is our man."

"I believe he is," said the Russian detective, "for he was willing enough to come to terms when I had traced the matter of the stolen watch to him, and there are some peculiar stains upon his coat."

"I must have him at once," cried Billy. "What understanding can we come at, Mr. Ivanovitch? I cannot allow you to go yet, for the proof you have offered must be verified. Have you anything to suggest? How will it do for me to go and find this fellow—"

"Give you the chance to bring a force of police here, and so cut off our chances? Hardly. I have as good reason to doubt you as you have to doubt me. No; but I will agree to have you and Bonoffsky go out together, find and arrest the man, and bring him here, when you can prove what I have stated—"

"And so give you so much more the mastery of the situation here, eh?" said Billy.

"Well, then, what will you do about it?"

"I will suggest something else."

"Do so."

"It is to your interest to bring this proof. Send a man out to find the Cracksman and bring him here, when, if we can accept your proof, we will come to an understanding."

"I will do that on one condition, sir."

"And what is that?"

"I will tell you: I am innocent of the crime, and am not afraid to be taken under arrest; but I am involved in Nihilist undertakings, and for that reason must keep myself at liberty. I must sail from New York on the Vishna tomorrow without fail, or our loss will be great. Promise me that you will take no steps against us that will involve us with the police for these abductions, and we will join you heartily in hunting down the murderer. What do you say?"

"What shall we say, Channing?" asked Billy.

"Accept the terms," was the response. "We cannot afford to hold out, for it is certain we have been on a false trail."

"Very well, I will agree to that," Billy made answer to the proposal.

"You swear to keep your word?"

"I do."

"That is enough, then. I believe you. I will allow you to take me to your office, where I will remain under guard while you find the man who robbed me. In the mean time my men will remove my effects to the ship, and with the help of Bonoffsky you cannot fail to get the murderer. When you have got him, and have put the crime on him, it is to be understood that I am to go free at once."

"Good," said Billy. "That is better than a fight here, in which a good many of us would

go down. Let's go about the business that way."

And in that manner it was arranged.

The Russian was taken to Billy's office, where he was left under the guard of Channing and Silent Seth, while Billy, Happy Harry, and the man Bonoffsky, set out upon their mission of finding Claude, the Cracksman.

The Russian having had dealings with the rascal so recently, knew pretty nearly where to find him.

They went to a certain unsavory quarter of the city, where they entered a disreputable den, and there was their man.

Claude the Cracksman, as the fellow was known, was just what his appellation implied, and was well known to the police of the metropolis.

At sight of the Russian detective, his face paled, and he appeared wonderfully uneasy. He looked toward the rear, as if calculating an escape that way.

Bonoffsky made a sign to him, and he and Billy advanced to where the fellow was seated in company with some others, making merry with what was evidently the proceeds of his crime.

"What d'ye want?" he asked at once.

"Nothing, myself," answered the Russian, "but this gentleman would like to have a few words with you."

"Well, what der you want, young feller?" to Billy.

"Perhaps you would rather have me explain my business in private," Billy responded.

"Naw," the fellow said disdainfully. "These here blokes is friends o' mine, and I ain't got no business with any feller what they can't hear if they want to. Go right ahead."

Billy and the Russian saw the rascal's game at once.

He had no idea of getting beyond reach of assistance, for he no doubt thought his friends would stand by him if any trouble was coming.

"Very well, have it that way if you want to," Billy accepted. "It is all the same to me. Will you please tell me whether you ever saw this before or not? I would like to know."

As he put the question he lifted his watch chain and displayed the charm.

At sight of the Russian coin the fellow's face grew ashy, and he gave a great start and got upon his feet.

"I see that it is perfectly familiar to you," observed Billy, coolly. "Now, I would like to ask you further where you lost it. Be careful how you answer."

Every man and woman in the place was now interested, and were pressing near to learn what it all meant. Billy and the Russian had their backs to the wall, so they could not be attacked from the rear.

"I never seen it afore in my life," the fellow began to deny, but the Russian quickly caught him up.

"Hold on there," he interrupted. "This is the charm that was on the chain of the watch you stole, and you said you had lost it."

"I thought you said you hadn't nothin' ter see me fer," the fellow parleyed to gain time so that he might get his thoughts together and invent a story. "This ain't no square deal, this ain't."

"You haven't answered my question," Billy urged.

"Naw, and mebby I won't, uther. Who are you, anyhow, and what right have ye got ter come here and question me?"

"My name is Weston, but I am better known as Broadway Billy, if it will do you any good to know that."

The fellow grew more pale than ever, and a murmur ran round the group.

"Well, I—I lost it," the rascal averred. "I told this here gent that I'd lost it, and so I had. Ain't that all there is of it? How can I tell just where I was when I lost it?"

"Tell me, then, what are these spots on your coat here?" Billy demanded, and he pointed accusingly at some dark stains on the man's sleeve.

Perspiration was now breaking out upon the fellow's face, and he was becoming desperate.

The other men around, or some of them at any rate, were looking on with dark brows, apparently ready to resist an arrest if it was coming to that.

"Them?" the accused man said, looking at the stains. "Them? Why, them's dirt, that's all. What d'ye take 'em fer? See here, young feller, what do you mean, anyhow?"

It was the last bold effort, the last stand that could be made before the terrible accusation he knew was coming.

"I'll tell you what I mean," answered Billy,

and he laid his powerful hand upon the man's shoulder. "I arrest you for the murder of Jabez Worthmore."

"I didn't do it!" the fellow cried in the most abject terror. "I never done it at all! You ain't got no right ter say I done it—you ain't got no proof that I done it—you ain't—"

"Hold on there," Billy ordered. "If you did not do it, how came this coin in his hand when he was found dead? And how came his blood upon your coat? You did it, of course you did; and here is a pair of bracelets that will just fit you. Now, what have you to say— Ha!"

At that instant some of the men sprung forward with oaths, to grapple with the detectives and overcome them.

Broadway Billy was quick to see it, however, and having handcuffed his prisoner he was quicker still to draw a brace of revolvers and present them to the fore.

The Russian was only a couple of seconds behind him in that performance, and they held the crowd covered neatly, the cowardly wretches falling back in haste to get out of range if possible.

"Interfere at your peril," warned Billy, sternly. "This man is my prisoner, and I am going to take him out of here. Out of the way every man and woman of you, or it will be the worse for you. Harry, you open that door and shut it as soon as we pass through."

Happy Harry sprung to obey, but at that moment something happened. The light went suddenly out, and a rush was made upon the detectives and their prisoner.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FIGHT IN THE DARK.

SOME person, some one other than those whom the detective held covered with their weapons, had turned out all the gas at once, and the darkness came upon them suddenly.

And with the going out of the lights a woman's voice was heard calling out in a high, shrill tone:

"Now ye have 'em, my dearies; now ye can do them up! If there are not enough of yous to get away with two men and a boy, you are no good at all. Go for them, and into the dump with 'em."

"You had better be slow about it," warned Broadway Billy, immediately. "We are armed, and it will be death to the first one who lays a hand upon us. No you don't, my birdie," to the prisoner, who was making an effort to get away. "I've got you, and I'm going to take you out of here dead or alive."

The Cracksman was making a determined effort to break away from him, but the young detective quickly had his strong hand upon his neck and brought him to time for the moment.

Meanwhile Happy Harry was fumbling for the door, and finding it now, he opened it and shouted:

"Come on, boss! Here's the door, wide open! Right this way with the lunk, and we'll more than make the fur fly if any one tries to stop us!"

Just as he finished there was the sound of a heavy slap, and Happy Harry was sent reeling back out of the way in a most inglorious manner, while the woman's voice called out again:

"Go for them, I tell you! Don't let them take Claude away, for he is one of my friends. Stop them, dearies, and pitch them into the dump!"

"Out of the way," warned Broadway Billy, "or there will be a sort of dumping here that you are not prepared for."

Barely a half minute had elapsed since the going out of the lights, hardly time for recovery and action, yet neither Billy nor the Russian was idle.

The latter had been groping for the prisoner, having been further from him than Billy at the first, and now seizing him by an arm, he assisted Billy in dragging him in the direction of the door.

"Is that you, Bonoffsky?" Billy asked.

"Yes, it's I," the answer. "Let's basten to get out."

But the woman had now roused the band of rascals to action, and the detectives were set upon on all sides at once.

They struck out, using their clubbed weapons, and one or two of the rogues went down. The main object was to get out with the prisoner, and that as soon as possible.

This was just what the woman and her minions endeavored to prevent, and under her urging the rascals sprung upon the detectives again, and this time with renewed determination, and

Billy and Bonofsky were forced to let go of their man and defend themselves.

By this time Happy Harry had picked himself up, and although a little dazed for a second he knew he had a part to play in that game.

He heard the struggle going on, with the blows falling thick and fast, and a curse or a groan following each blow, and one or two heavy thumps told of some man's going down.

Harry could see nothing, of course, and hardly knew in what part of the room he was. He felt in his pocket for a match, and finding some, made haste to light one, to throw a little light upon the situation. And as he did so an exciting scene was revealed.

In the midst of a group of angry men and furious women were Broadway Billy and his Russian ally, fighting desperately, each with a revolver in use as a club, and on the floor were two or three who had gone down under their blows and who were groping around in a dazed manner trying to get out of the *melee*. And the prisoner at the same time was groping along the wall trying to find his way out.

All this Happy Harry was quick to take in, and the next moment he had to extinguish the light and look out for himself.

The woman proprietor of the den had looked to see where the light had come from, and seeing him, sprung at him with an angry snarl.

"It's you, is it?" she cried. "I'll soon fix you, you little imp! You won't light no more matches, you just bet you won't!"

"Come on, you old witch!" Harry retorted. "Here I am, and this is a game o' blind man's buff. Right this way, now, but I'll bet you don't find me when you get here, dearie!"

He heard the woman close to him, when he suddenly became silent and dodged, while she crashed against the wall with considerable force, setting up a howl at once and sending forth a volley of imprecations upon the author of her mishap.

Harry was silent, then, with an object in view. He was determined the prisoner should not escape, and hastened to where he had seen him.

The fight was going on hot and furious the while, and the noise had grown to such a degree by this time that it must soon draw attention from without. And of a sudden a whistle was sounded.

It was by Broadway Billy. Taking advantage of a second's relief, he had applied his police whistle to his lips and sounded the shrill call for help. Once again its ear-splitting note rung out, when he was set upon anew and had to dash into the struggle afresh.

In feeling for the handcuffed prisoner, Happy Harry came first in contact with a door, and his hand fell upon a key that was in the lock.

He had noticed this key before the lights went out, and knew it was a rear exit, and now with quick decision he turned the key and locked it, putting the key in his pocket.

The very next moment the groping prisoner reached the door; his manacled hands grasped the knob, when, finding the lock sprung, an oath of disappointment escaped him. At the same moment Happy Harry set upon him and dragged him to the floor. The boy meant business now.

Not more than three minutes had passed, if indeed so much time, and through all the struggle the Russian and Billy had maintained an almost perfect silence, only speaking often enough each to apprise the other of his position.

Now, however, the Russian sounded a call for help.

"This way, friend!" he cried. "I'm downed! This way, or I'm—"

His cry ended with a choking gurgle, and Broadway Billy feared a knife had done its work.

With a desperate effort he thrust his foes from him and sprung to the rescue, stumbling when he came to the wriggling forms on the floor, but quickly recovering and feeling for his partner.

It was but the work of a moment to locate him, with the three or four men who held him down. These the young Hercules laid hold upon, jerking them from their victim and sending them crashing to the wall. Billy had hardly known how strong he really was.

When three of the fellows had been disposed of thus, the Russian made an effort and got up, casting the others from him, and the fight was begun over again.

Broadway Billy was all the time reaching for his prisoner, and every man he came up against he felt to learn whether he was handcuffed.

By this time it began to dawn upon Billy that

possibly the fellow had escaped. He had not seen him during the brief seconds the match lighted up the scene, but that light and Happy Harry's voice, had assured him that Harry was alive, and he now called out to him:

"Harry?"

"Right here, boss!" was the response.

Harry had overcome the handcuffed man, and now had him by the heels, and was preparing to drag him across to the other door.

"Don't let that man get out of here," Billy ordered. "Get hold of him and hang on to him like a bulldog. Knock him on the head if you find it necessary; anything to keep him—"

Another onset cut Billy's words short.

"I've got him," assured Harry. "I'll eat him whole before I'll give him up, you bet on that!"

"You will, hey?" cried the voice of the she devil proprietor of the den. "It is there ye are, hey? I'll fix ye this time!"

She was running forward in the dark while she spoke, and came suddenly to grief. A man whom the Russian had just sent spinning toward the wall collided with her, and both went to the floor in a confused heap, where they mingled their imprecations freely.

Happy Harry wanted light, but it was no time then for him to think of making it. He had his prisoner on the floor, and had hold of his feet, and was prepared to give him a free sleigh-ride across the floor.

He started at once for the opposite door, and brought up against the wall, but near the desired point, and, feeling quickly, found the knob.

Just then Billy's whistle sounded again, in the midst of the uproar, and a response to it was heard from without.

This made things lively, as can be imagined. The rascals fought more desperately than ever, some of them with the one desire to escape.

"Have you got the prisoner, Harry?" Billy called out.

"Bet your necktie I have, boss!" was the cheery response.

"All right. Hold fast to him like a miser to money, and we'll soon come out on top."

"Hold out it is, chief! The jeejeeb has got there with both feet, you bet. Selah!"

There had been no firing during the fight. Neither side could afford to take the risk of that.

Now came a crash at the front doors, followed by the heavy tread of feet, at which the rascals made a dash for safety.

"This way," called out one. "This way! We'll get out the rear door and be off."

"Yes," piped up the woman proprietor, "take care of yourselves, dearies."

One reached the rear door, but only to find it locked; whereupon went up a howl of rage, indeed.

"No open—no scoot yet!" cried Harry, in delight. "I have got the bulge on you there. Come here, boss, and hold this door: we've got 'em all. I have locked the other one."

"Good for you!" cried Billy. "We'll scoop them all, for here is the force. Now, you devils, the first who attempts to use a weapon, when light comes, I'll drop in his tracks! You know Broadway Billy, so don't try it on."

CHAPTER XVIII. CONCLUSION.

THE policemen were in truth at hand, and as they entered the darkened room Broadway Billy struck a match and threw some light upon the scene.

"Officers," he said, "I'm Billy Weston, or Broadway Billy. I want you to take every man and woman in this place, except my prisoner there, and lock them up under the charge of resisting an officer."

"We'll do it, and glad of the chance!" one of the policemen cried. "I have been waiting to get a crack at this den."

Billy had turned the gas on again and the place was alight once more.

The group of scamps, both men and women, huddled in one corner, save the prisoner whom Harry still had by the heels and one other man who was senseless on the floor, and the police had no trouble in taking them.

The den was cleared out and closed up, and the prisoners taken to the nearest station, while Billy and his two allies bore their prisoner away with them.

He was taken at once to Billy's office, where a confession was forced from him as soon as the proof was brought to bear against him. He was the man; there was no doubting that fact.

He confessed that he had robbed the Russian of his watch and chain, and that he had them on at the time when he killed the man. In the struggle Mr. Worthmore tore off the charm, and after that he, the murderer, pawned the watch as soon as possible.

The Russian detective had found the watch in pawn, and by it had tracked it to him as the robber.

He stated that he knew Mr. Worthmore's habit of collecting his rent upon a certain day, and resolved to relieve him of it. He entered the house with a latch-key which he had previously taken from his victim, and made his way to his sleeping room. He thought the man was asleep, but found him awake, and before he could withdraw Mr. Worthmore grappled with him and he killed him.

The confession was enough, and, true to his word, Billy allowed the Russian to go. Indeed, there was no help for it, and certainly no occasion to do otherwise.

The Russian was a Nihilist agent who had come to America for the purpose of getting aid for the Nihilist cause. He had succeeded, and had a great amount of money to take away with him. Knowing that his Government had spies upon him, he had protected himself with a strong body-guard, and some of them seeing Billy at the office of the consul had formed the idea that he was in Russian employ to hunt them down. That suspicion had been strengthened when they found he was really and determinedly after Ivanovitch.

From the moment when the Russian left his office, Broadway Billy never saw or heard from him again. So far as proof against the Cracksman went it was not necessary, for Channing had been witness to all.

Of course Billy kept the coin as a souvenir of the novel and exciting case.

When the truth came out the newspapers gave Billy due praise, and the inspector complimented him highly.

Broadway Billy, though, took little credit to himself, declaring that his two boy assistants had done the greater part of the work. And even Channing admitted that Silent Seth had proved a big factor in the game at the right moment.

When the Cracksman was tried, the coin convicted him. There was plenty of proof that it had been in his possession on the day of the crime, but even without the confession the rascal would have been convicted. The red bill-book was found in his possession, with some of the money still in it.

Jarvis Bunting and Ridley Ruffle were both arrested, and a case was made out against them. Bunting was an impostor, in no way related to Worthmore, and Ruffle was at the head of a conspiracy to get hold of the fortune. Their scheme was baffled and each received a taste of the law as it applied to his offense. As for the Cracksman, he would have come to the death-chair had not death come to him before the appointed time.

Tilly Tucker and her lover, Watson Barlow, were married, and soon settled down to enjoy the fortune that had so unexpectedly come to them. Tilly never knew the true reason why her master had been so kind to her, but her lawyer gave a hint, secretly, to a chosen few that Worthmore was, in truth, her own father.

Little more remains to be recorded.

Broadway Billy not only complimented his apprentices highly, but also rewarded them substantially. He now fully understood their worth. With them for coadjutors he felt that his own career was doubly assured of success. He had nothing but respect and reverence for the "philosopher," and froze to him "like a country Jake to an ice-cream saloon," as he expressed it.

Seth said little, but there was no mistaking the regard he had for his chief and for Harry. The boy, so reserved in manner, was capable of great depth of feeling and both Billy and Harry soon learned to read him aright and to love him. The combination could not have been perfect without him.

THE END.

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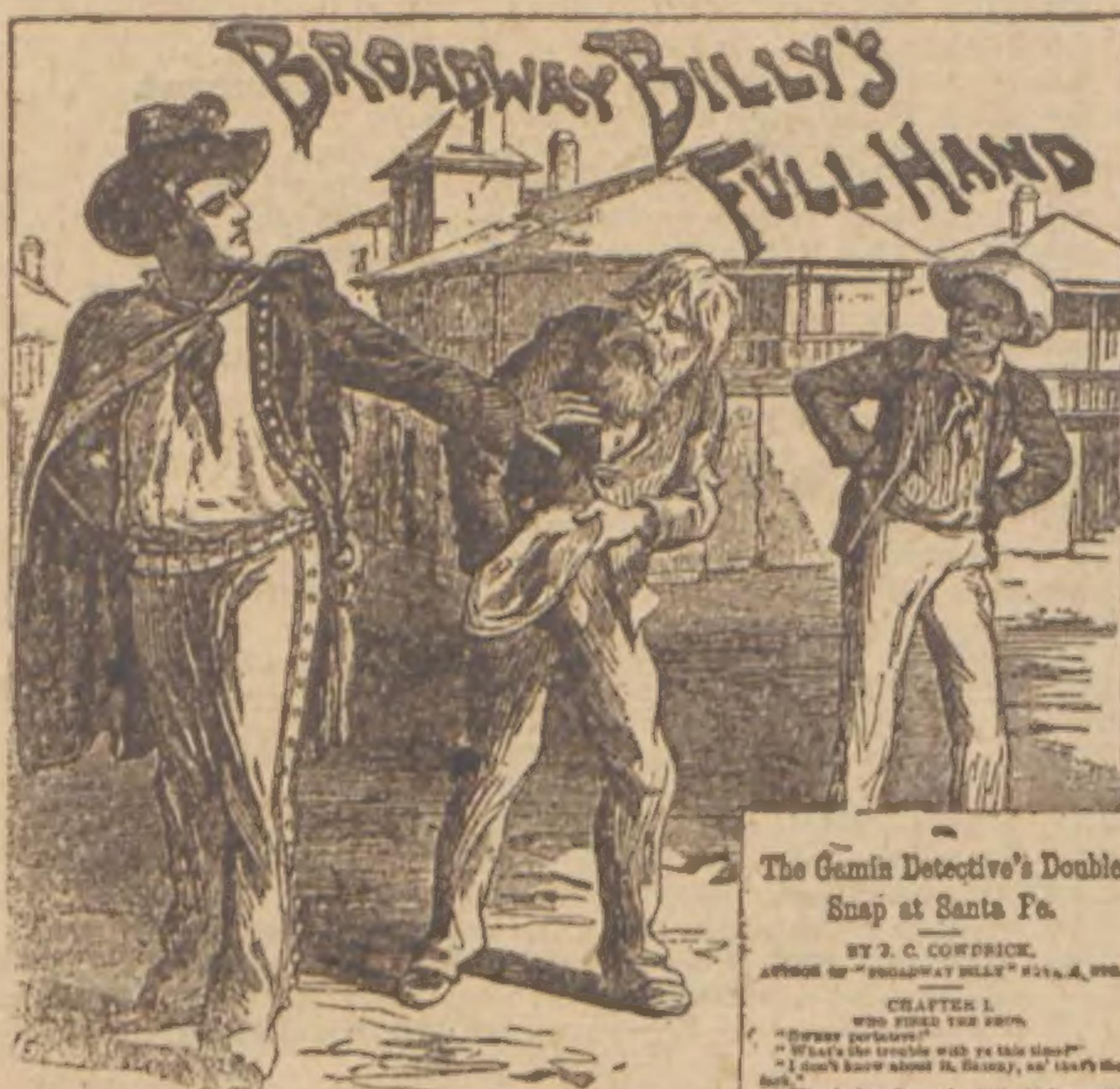
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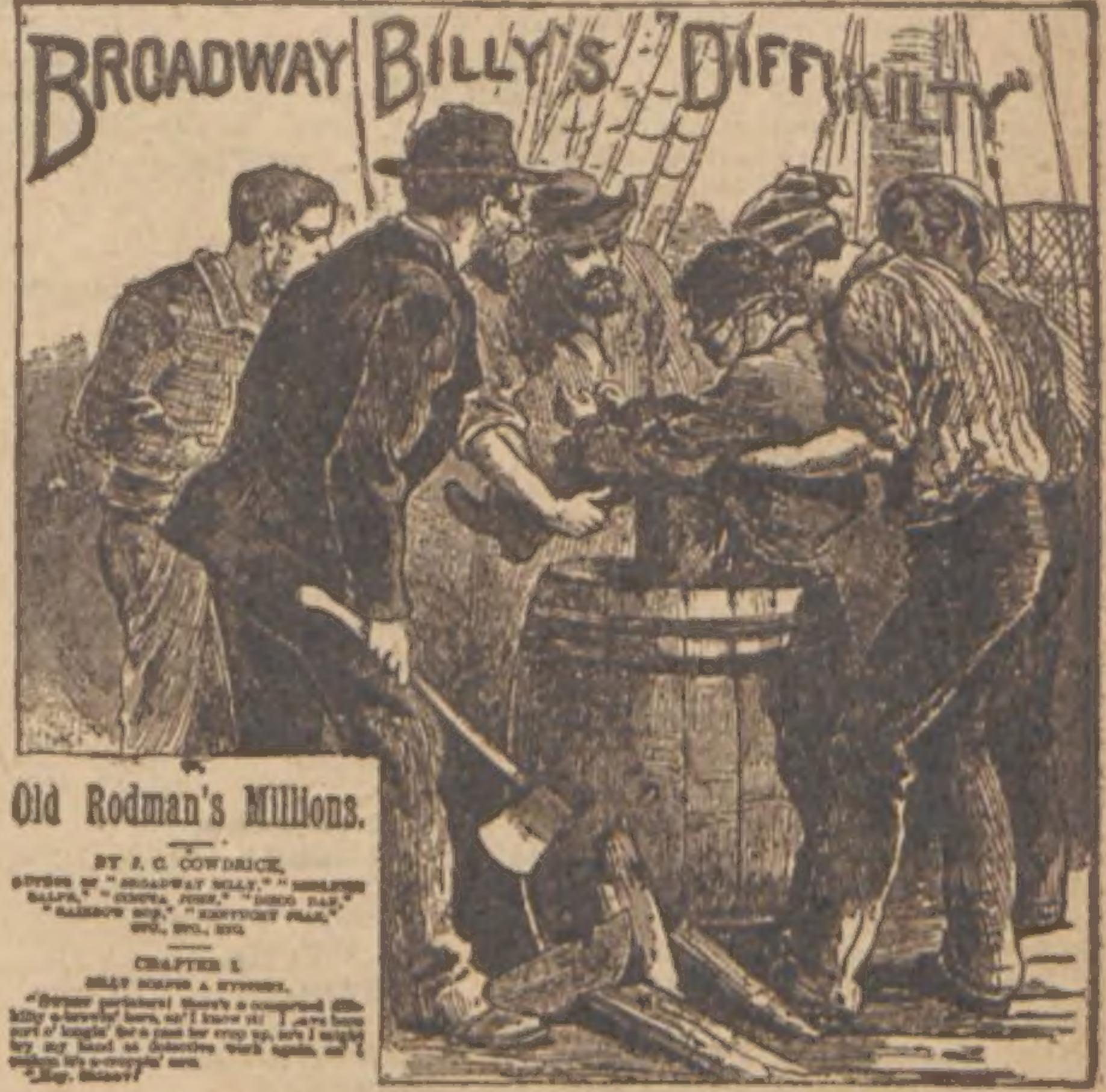


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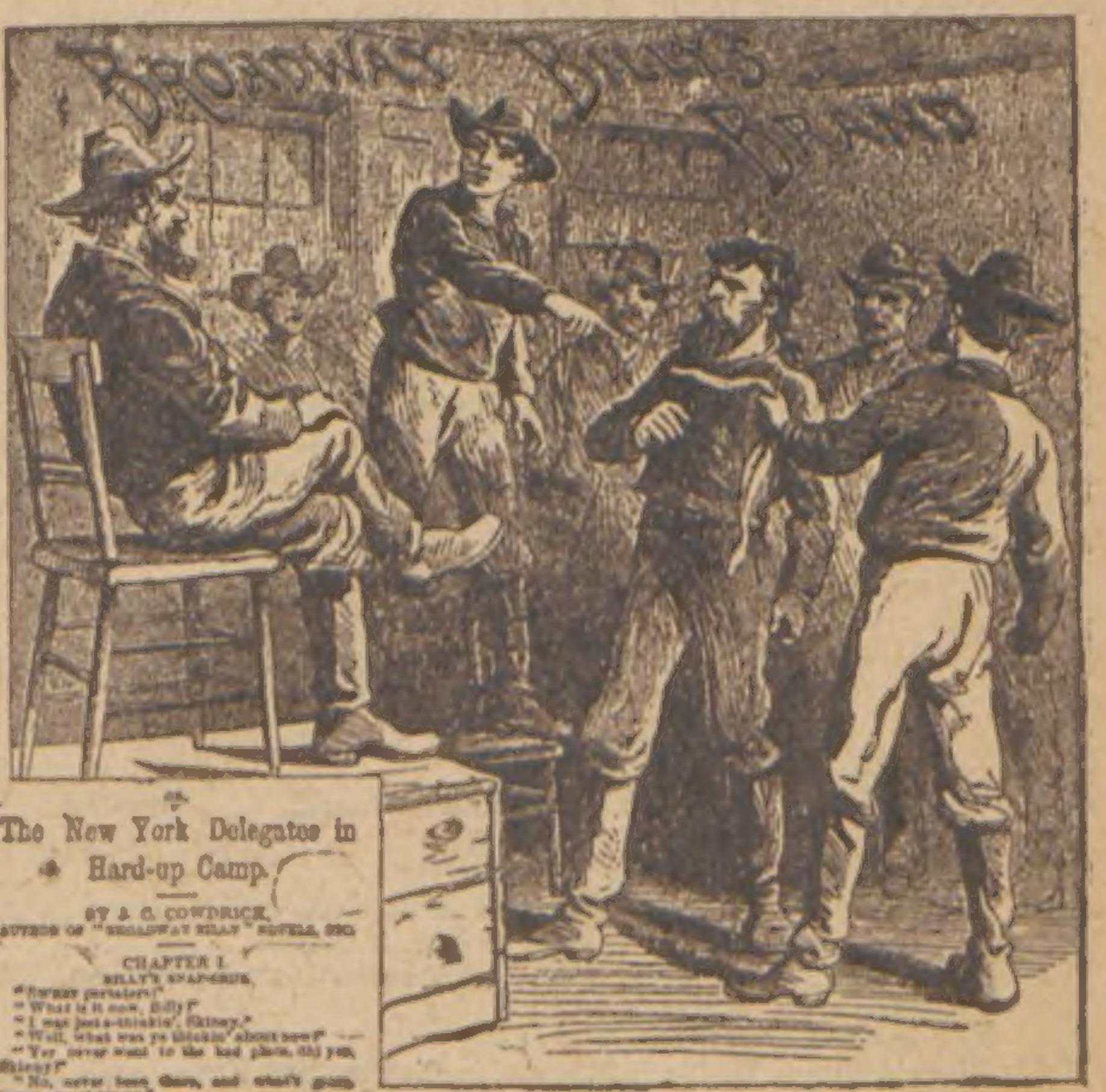


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